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GAME Player's PC STRATEGY GUIDE™

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TRACON II
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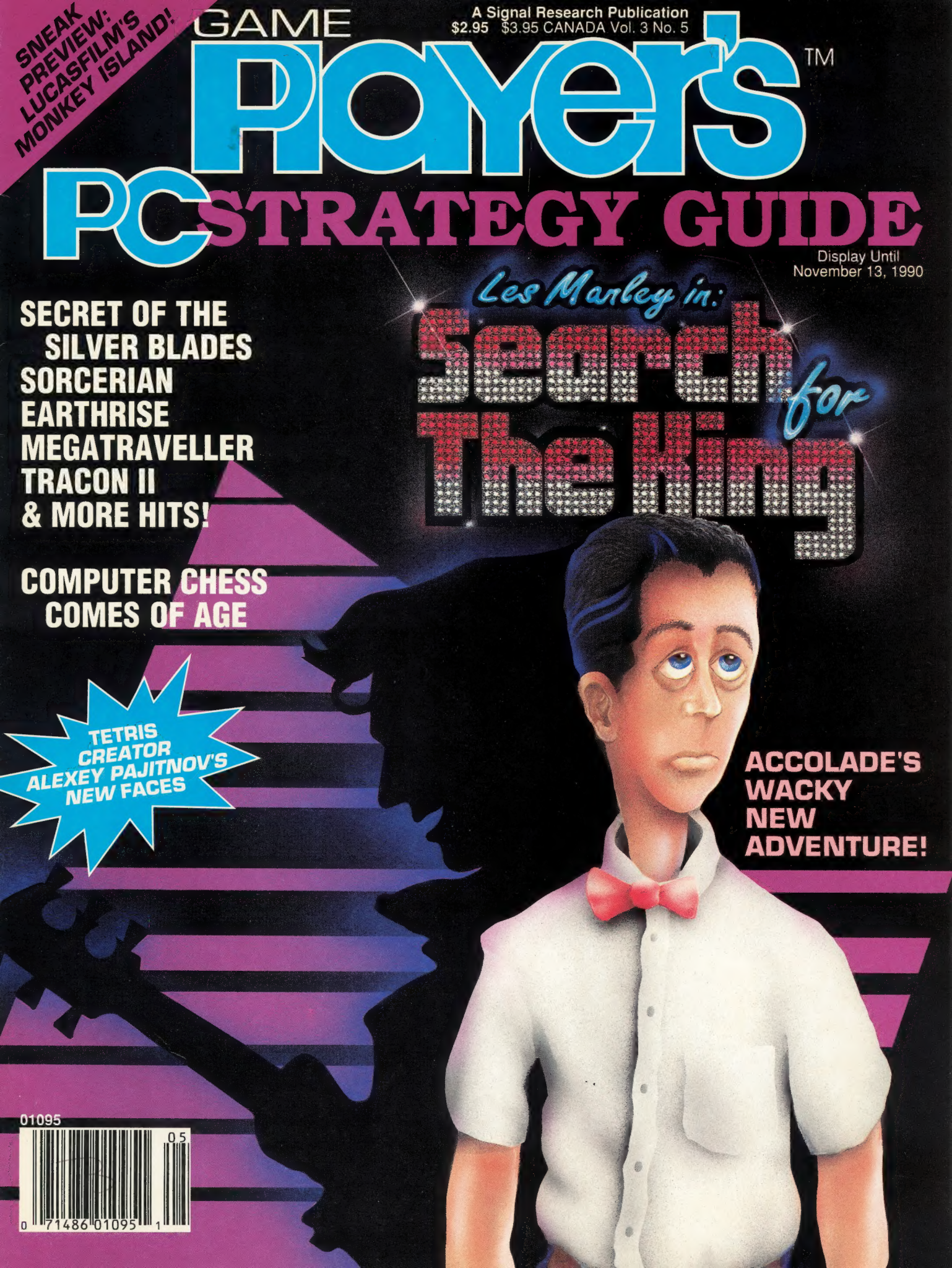

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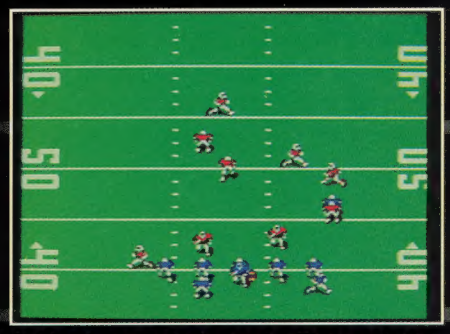

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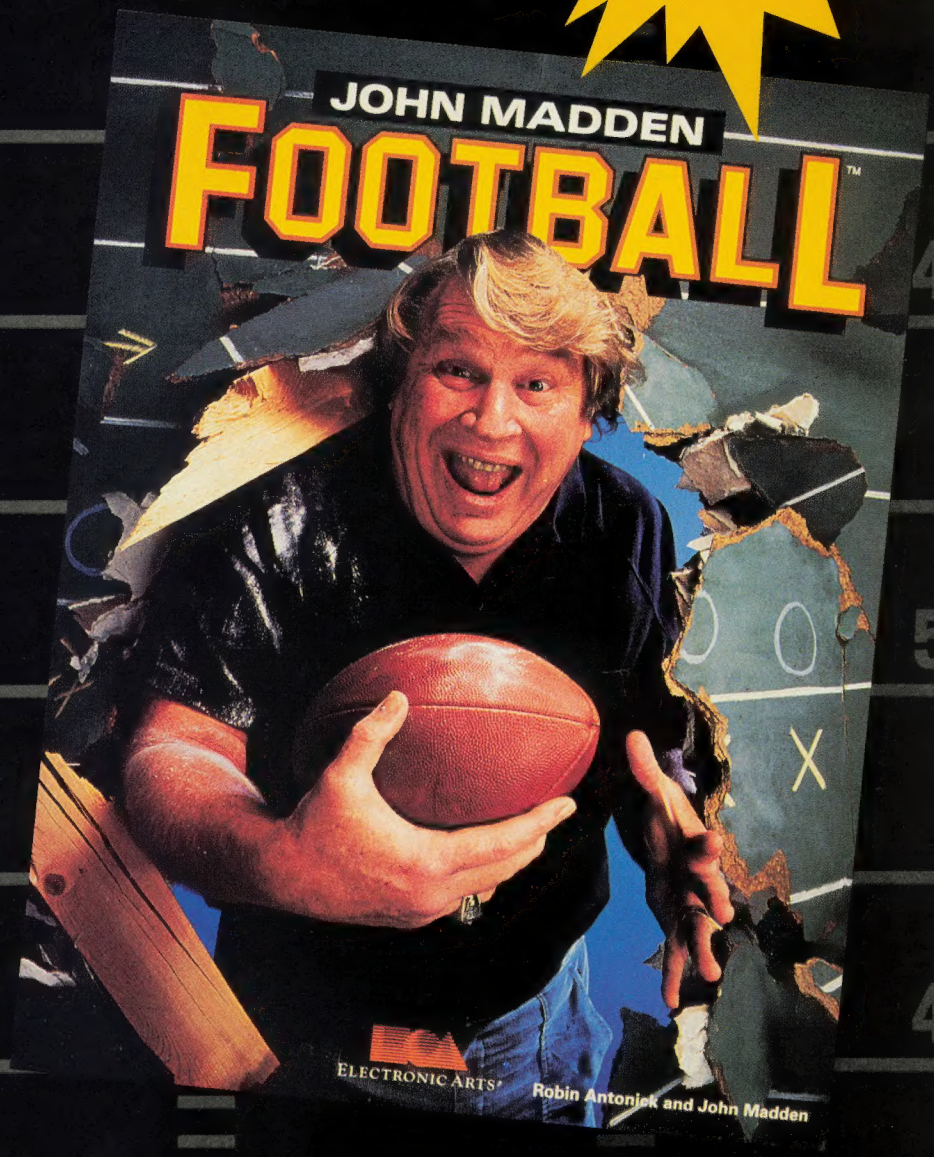

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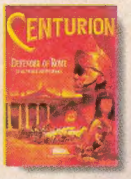

Electronic Arts' Centurion

Capstone's Bill & Ted's Excellent Adventure

Three-Sixty Pacific's Sands of Fire

System requirements: IBM PC, XT, AT, or compatible with 256K RAM, DOS 2.0 or higher, CGA, EGA, or monochrome graphics adaptor, and headset or external speaker.

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COVER

Les Manley in: Search for The King

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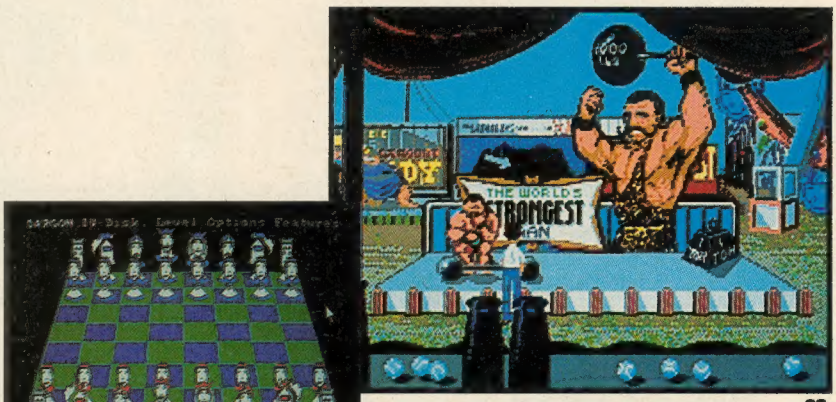

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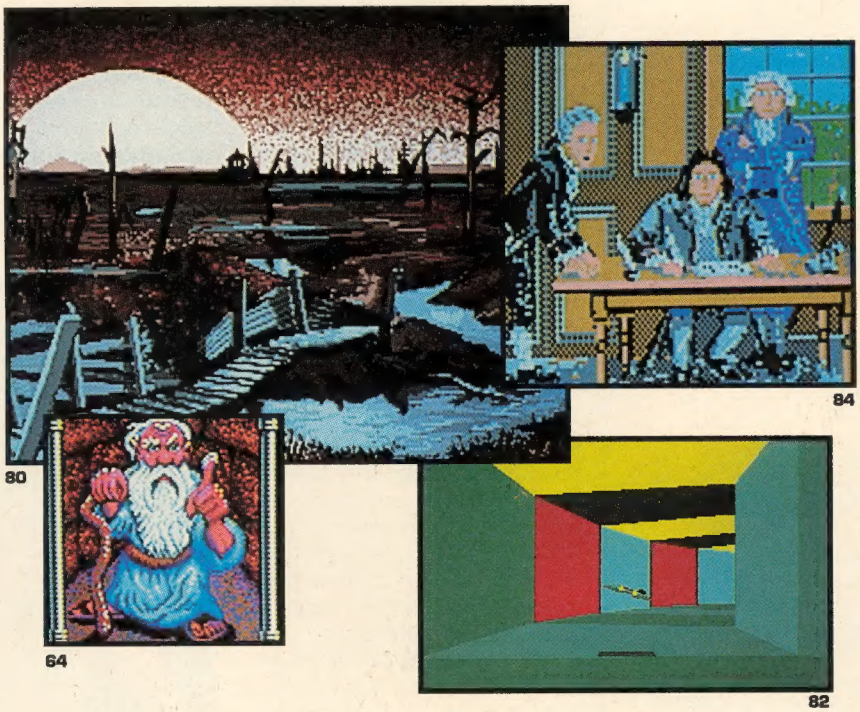

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GAME Player's™ PC STRATEGY GUIDE

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 1990

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The *Game Player's PC Strategy Guide* (ISSN-1041-5424) is published bimonthly by Signal Research, Inc., 300-A South Westgate Drive, Greensboro, NC 27407, USA. Application to mail second class postage pending at Greensboro, NC, and additional mailing offices. Newsstand distribution is handled by the Curtis Circulation Company. Subscriptions: One year (6 issues) US: $14.95. CANADA: Add $1.00 per issue. Outside US and CANADA: Add $2.00 per issue. For subscription customer service, call 1-800-222-9631. Postmaster please send change of address to *Game Player's*, P.O. Box 57876, Boulder, CO 80322-7876.

Signal Research, Inc., publishes *Game Player's (tm): The Leading Magazine of Video and Computer Entertainment*, the *Game Player's Guides* (tm) to Nintendo, Game Boy, and PC computer games; *Game Player's GameTapes* (tm), a series of tutorial videotapes about selected games; *Game Player's Sports For Kids* (tm), a sports magazine for children; and operates the *Game Player's* Pro-Tip Hotline, a telephone service offering hints and tips for selected Nintendo games. Subscriptions to the *Game Player's* magazine: 12 issues US: $26.50. CANADA: Add $1 per issue. Outside US and CANADA: Add $2.00 per issue. Corporate, editorial, production, and customer service offices are located in Greensboro, North Carolina, (919) 299-9902; FAX (919) 854-0963. Advertising sales and circulation offices are located in Fair Lawn, New Jersey, (201) 703-9500; FAX (201) 703-9509. Dealer orders and inquiries should be directed to Dealer Sales at (201) 703-9500.

The Editors welcome company product information for all video and computer games. Such materials should be addressed to: Editor, *Game Player's*, P.O. Box 29364, Greensboro, NC 27429, USA. Overnight delivery parcels should be addressed to 300-A South Westgate Drive, Greensboro, NC 27407. Editorial telephone and FAX numbers are noted above. Unsolicited manuscripts cannot be returned or acknowledged.

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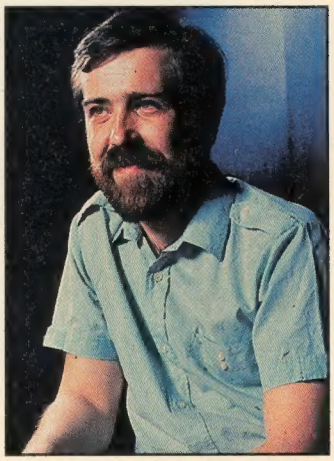
EDITOR'S NOTES

NEW PRODUCTS, PERSONALITIES, AND FACES

We think you'll agree this is an exceptionally interesting issue of *Game Player's PC Strategy Guide*. There are three excellent features, a look at new war games and simulators introduced at this summer's Consumer Electronics Show, strategy guides to several key new games, columnist treatments of two interesting new products, and reviews of some truly good-looking new games.

Alexey Pajitnov's latest effort, *Faces*, gets a close-up look, as does Pajitnov himself. We were delighted to talk to this unique Soviet game designer (*Tetris* and *Welltris*), and we think the interview reveals the warmth and charm that have endeared him to so many in the PC game industry.

Another important game debut featured in this issue is our cover story, *Les Manley in: Search for The King*. This Accolade product bears strong resemblance to the *Leisure Suit Larry* series, yet it has its own unique approach, style, and sense of humor. The feature includes an interview with designer Steve Cartwright that's a must-read for all veteran gamers. If you don't know



Alexey Pajitnov, author of Tetris, Welltris, *and his latest game,* Faces.

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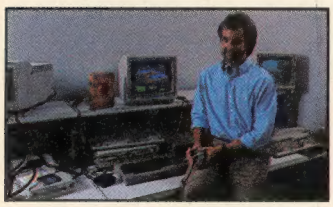
EDITOR'S NOTES

Cartwright's name, you'll know his work. Cartwright offers some witty conversation spiced with amusing anecdotes that reflect the unpredictable twists and turns of the game industry in the 1980s.

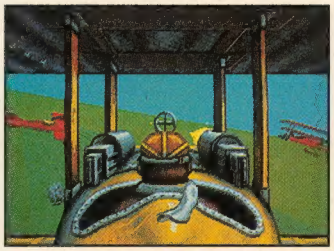
Having known and worked with Selby Bateman for years, I'm convinced that you couldn't find a better author for our chess feature. He's a serious student of the game — and he's always been the first to learn the newest chess game, usually within hours of its arrival at the office. His chess roundup, "Computer Chess Comes of Age," is an overview of two of the most popular PC chess programs, *Sargon IV* and *Chessmaster 2100*, plus a brief look at several other programs that offer more specialized approaches to the royal game. As you'll see, computer chess today has something for players of all calibers and interests.

In his "Desktop General" column, Bill Trotter treats us to a first-hand look at some of the exciting new games he saw at this summer's Consumer Electronics Show. He previews a variety of dazzling new World War I flight simulators (Dynamix' *Red Baron*, Cinemaware's *Wings*, and Three-Sixty's *Ace of Aces II*) along with some more historically recent new packages in the same genre.



Steve Cartwright, author of the rollicking Les Manley in: Search for The King.

Bill also checks out three new naval simulations, a few upcoming titles in the land warfare category, and last, but not least, MicroProse's *Universal Military Simulator II*.



CinemaWare's Wings, *one of three promising new World War I flight simulators arriving this fall.*

Arlan Levitan makes his debut this issue as our "Virtual Reality" columnist with a look at *TRACON II*, a new air-traffic control simulator from Wesson International. *TRACON II* operates in real-time, and, as Arlan points out, it simulates not only the broad management of multiple details, but also the real stress experienced by all air traffic controllers. Despite the anxiety he suffered, Arlan finds *Tracon II*, in his words, to be quite satisfying and uniquely different from other simulations.

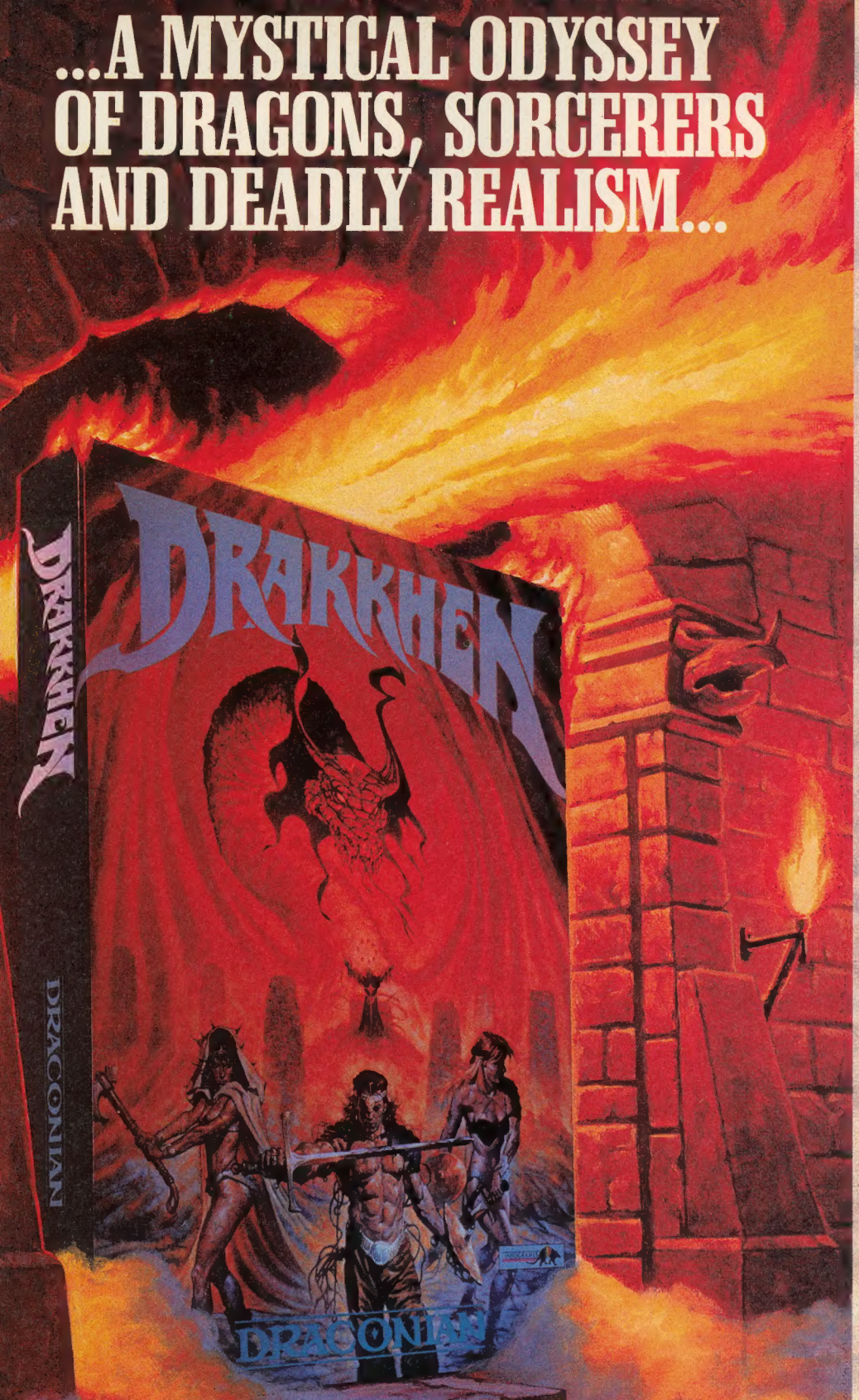
Fantasy RPG fans should check out Neil Randall's "Alternate Lives" column this month. Neil puts the microscope to *MegaTraveller 1: The Zhodani Conspiracy*, the first installment in a new science-fiction role-playing series from Paragon Software. This game is derived from the popular role-playing board game developed by the Game Designer's Workshop years ago.

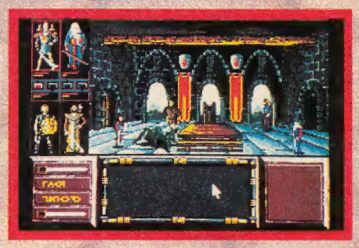
A lot of good, exciting new PC games are soon to hit the shelves, and we're impressed with the batch we've seen in recent weeks and months. You'll find several of these covered or reviewed elsewhere in this issue — and you'll find a lot more in the next several issues as we approach the boom time (translation: holiday season) for new PC titles. Until next time, enjoy this issue.

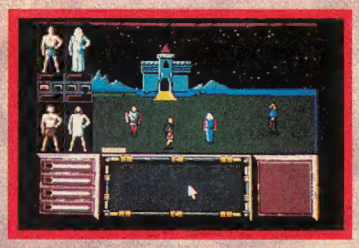
Lance Elko
Editorial Director

ENTER THE WORLD OF DRACONIAN AND DISCOVER...

...A MYSTICAL ODYSSEY OF DRAGONS, SORCERERS AND DEADLY REALISM...







Dare to discover *Drakkhen*—the premier title in the Draconian line and the first role playing game that combines FRP themes with the most advanced technical wizardry ever!

You have been chosen to lead a hand-picked band of four brave adventurers on a treacherous journey. Your quest: to reclaim the mystical jewels from the eight dragon princes, resurrect the great dragon and restore the primeval realm—the source of all magic in the universe.

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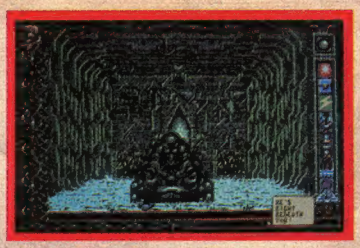

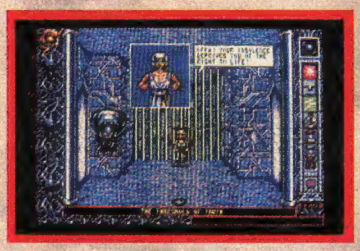

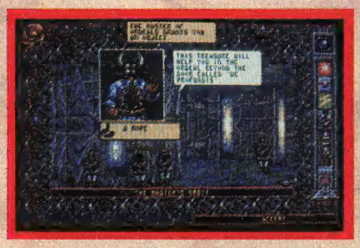

...A SURREAL FUTURE OF MUTANTS, TELEPATHS AND MIND-BENDING INTRIGUE...

Enter the *Chamber of the Sci-Mutant Priestess*—the second sensational title in the Draconian line—and explore a bizarre post-burn world caught in the throes of mutant treachery.

Set on a distant planet, the *Chamber of the Sci-Mutant Priestess* combines mystic drama and humor with a sophisticated icon interface, so players can easily maneuver through the game's captivating plot.

You play the role of Raven, a Tuner, whose telepathic abilities provide a unique advantage when fighting the enemy—a monstrous race of mutants called Protozorqs.

Command eight sci-powers with "iconomized" ease as you probe the chambers of the mutants temple, searching for your abducted girlfriend while engaging in a brain-draining test of five ordeals.

Animated and colorful, the *Chamber of the Sci-Mutant Priestess* promises hours of challenging intrigue for novice and expert fantasy game players alike. Don't miss out on the first psionic thriller of its kind—from Draconian!

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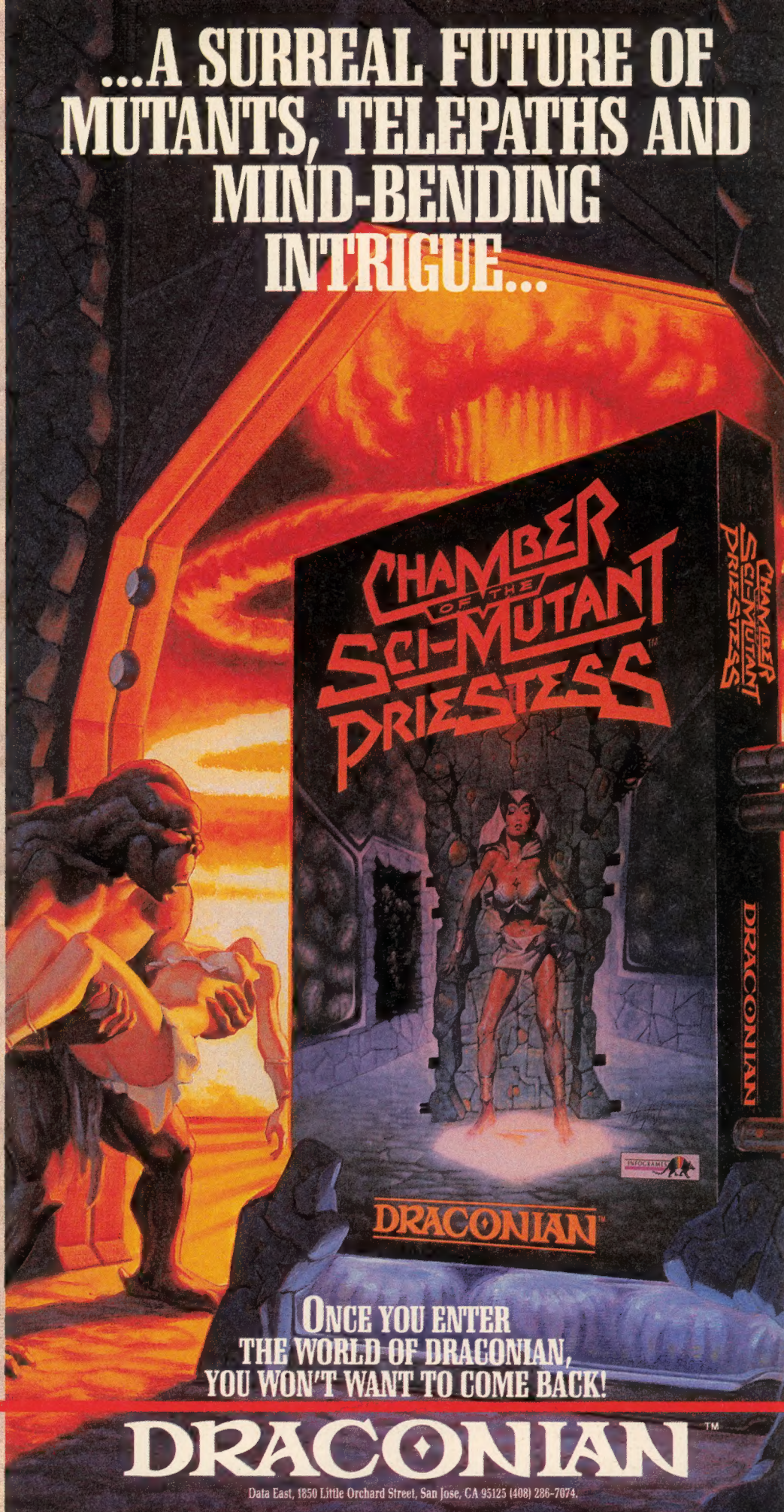

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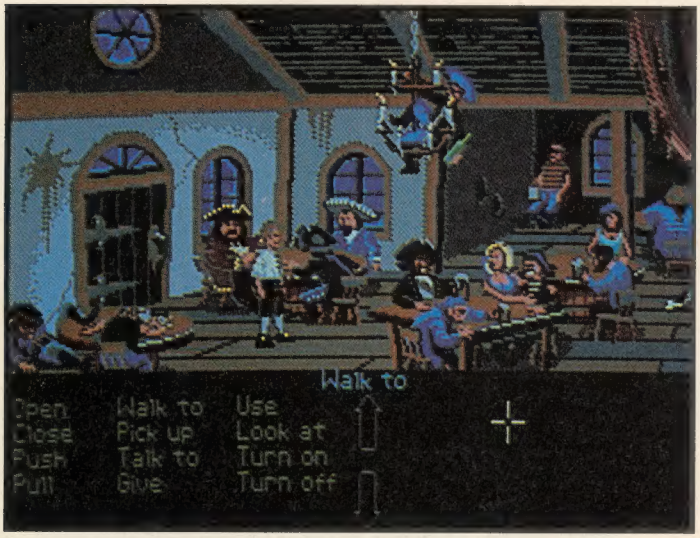


The pirates inside the local tavern are drinking to forget. Or have they forgotten because they're drinking?

Out-of-work pirates loitering on the streets of Melee are often good sources of information. You might be able to pick up a few coins as well.

Get ready to swash your buckles! *The Secret of Monkey Island*, the new interactive adventure from **Lucasfilm**, makes you the wannabe-pirate of an island filled with buccaneers, lost treasure, cryptic maps, and mysterious legends.

This is Lucasfilm's fourth major graphic adventure. The first two, *Maniac Mansion* and *Zak McKracken and the Alien Mindbenders* featured a point-and-click interface. A list of possible actions was listed on one side of the screen, such as "look," "pick up," or "give," and inventory items were listed on the other side.

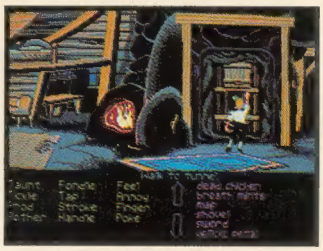
The company's third adventure game, *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*, kept the point-and-click action, but added dialog choices. A list of four comments would appear at the bottom of the screen, and Indy would have to choose the best remark to make to, say, a Nazi guard or a Venetian librarian. That comment would lead to another, and so on. An incorrect response sometimes meant you'd end up empty-handed instead of adding a valuable item to your inventory.

The Secret of Monkey Island combines the best aspects of both formats. There's still the point-and-click method of finding, securing, and using items, but there are dialog choices as well — except your comments rarely affect the game in any significant way. Also, the game takes as much time to complete as the earlier adventures. This should please those who were disappointed that their *Loom* (another Lucasfilm adventure, although one with a different interface) escapade didn't last longer.

Monkey Island begins on the Caribbean island of Melee. You've got empty pockets, no prospects, and a burning desire to sail the high seas under the Jolly Roger. Luckily, Melee is chock-full of pirates. Unfortunately, all of them are afraid to go to sea, much less take you with them.

You can find out all about the horrible ghost-pirate, LeChuck, by talking with the pirates in the tavern. And if you chat with the important-looking pirates in the back room, you'll learn what you need to do before the scalawags will take you under their wing. You need to finish the three trials they assign you before you leave the island.

But before you head into serious adventuring, you need to explore the town, picking up anything you think might be helpful. Hey, even pirates need breath mints — especially if they're grog-flavored. You'll find that a lot of things seem to cost *money*, and that shop



On the far reaches of Melee, there is a terrible beast ... a beast that turns grown men with tatoos into quivering mounds of gelatin. Are you brave enough to face the beast?

owners know all the tricks pulled by thieving customers. Your best bet is to find a short-term job — it may be pretty risky, but the pay is good.

Once you've got some cash in your pocket and a sword in your hand, it's time to tackle those trials. You should pump up with the local body-builder before taking on the swordmaster. Even after you've got a little muscle, work on your parries and thrusts by skirmishing with a few of the buccaneers roaming the island.

Here's another point where *Monkey Island* differs from other role-playing games. Yes, you have to build experience points before you can fence with the swordmaster, but you earn the points by

carrying on lengthy insult contests with the pirates as you fence with them. You can choose your insults and replies from lists at the bottom of the screen.

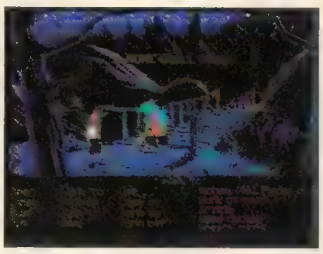
You gradually build up a library of insults and replies, until you finally humiliate one pirate and beat him in a match. When a pirate mumbles "oh, yeah?" to one of your criticisms about his personal hygiene, you know you're on the road to victory.

The hidden treasure isn't too difficult to find (although it's ultimately disappointing for a wealth-craving adventurer) if you follow the map you bought in town. It may not *look* like a map, but you need to put your best foot forward. And raiding the governor's house is a piece of cake once you've figured out how to dispense with her guard dogs.

But don't be surprised if the island is nearly deserted by the time you complete your trials. Pirates are a superstitious lot, and they're apt to take off at the first sign of trouble. So it's up to you to buy a ship, assemble a crew, and explore the great unknown seas around Melee. It may take you a few hours to get off the island, but even then you've only just begun.

Fans of the Lucasfilm interactive adventures should start saving their money now — *Monkey Island* is every bit as good as the company's other games. In fact, as if to reward those people who have played its other games, Lucasfilm has laced *Monkey Island* with references to *Loom*, *Indiana Jones*, and the rest. You've gotta love it. And after all, what other game will tell you how to use a dead chicken with a pulley in the middle?

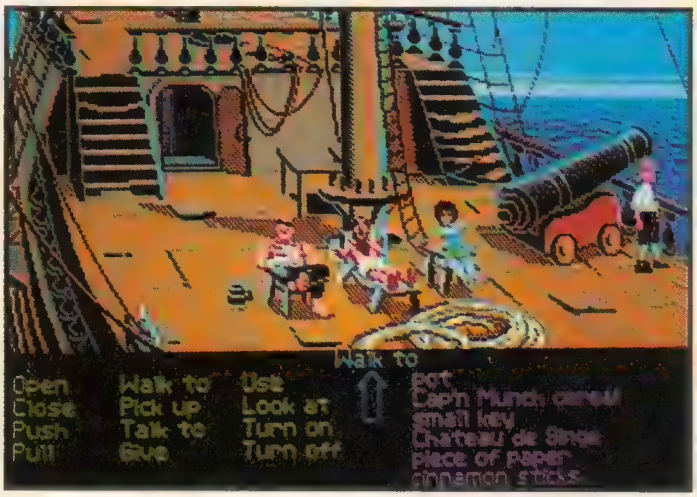
Now that the governor's been kidnapped, it might be a good time to mosey over to her place for a look around. If you've asked the pirates for advice, you should be able to dispense with her pesky piranha poodles.



Bribe the troll with something frivolous and you're on your way.

FUEL ECONOMY
Let's talk extras.
I'd like to make you an offer.
Well, what do you think it's worth?
Forget it, I don't need this boat anyway.

A good pirate can't get far without a ship. Unfortunately, your coffers aren't full enough for the deluxe models. Try hammering out a deal for a budget model with Stan, the Used Ship Man.



You're no sooner on deck of your own vessel when your already limited crew turns mutinous. Great! How will you ever get to Monkey Island if everyone is lounging around with ice-cold drinks?

RED BARON

Do you love the excitement of a good dogfight, but hate flight simulators that require a graduate degree in aeronautics just to get the crate off the ground — and then keep you so busy reading dials, gauges and screens that you don't have time to enjoy combat when you do get in it? If so, **Dynamix's** new *Red Baron* may be the game you've been waiting for.

This hot new World War I simulator offers detailed modelling of 22 different period aircraft, including quite a few that have never been simulated before, such as the giant lumbering "Gotha" bombers with which the Germans mounted their first aerial blitz on London.

The program also gives players a remarkable degree of flexibility when it comes to customizing the degree of difficulty and realism to their own skills and computers. If you're an authenticity fanatic, for example, you can choose to fly with *only* those instruments that were available to pilots of that plane at that time; if you'd like to spend less time getting lost, you can add a discreet navigation aid or two.

You can role play from a stellar array of actual World War I aces, either flying as a selected ace or as his opponent. Either way, the program accurately mimics the actual flying style and tactics of that pilot. While few aviation buffs will be able to resist going *mano-a-mano* with von Richthoffen, *Red Baron* lets you fight a host of other colorful sky-knights: Billy Bishop, Georges Gunemeyer — even a young Hermann Goering!

Graphically, this game looks like a corker: When you fly toward the sun, the screen fills with glare; fly into a cloud, and mist drifts over the windscreen. You can also record an *entire* mission, replay it, and then actually jump in at any point to try new tactics.

There are no high-tech gadgetry and beeping "systems" to mess with — just a stick, a rudder, a gun sight, and the wind singing through the struts. Of course, there are no parachutes either, so when you take to the sky in *Red Baron*, you're flying for keeps.

RINGS OF MEDUSA

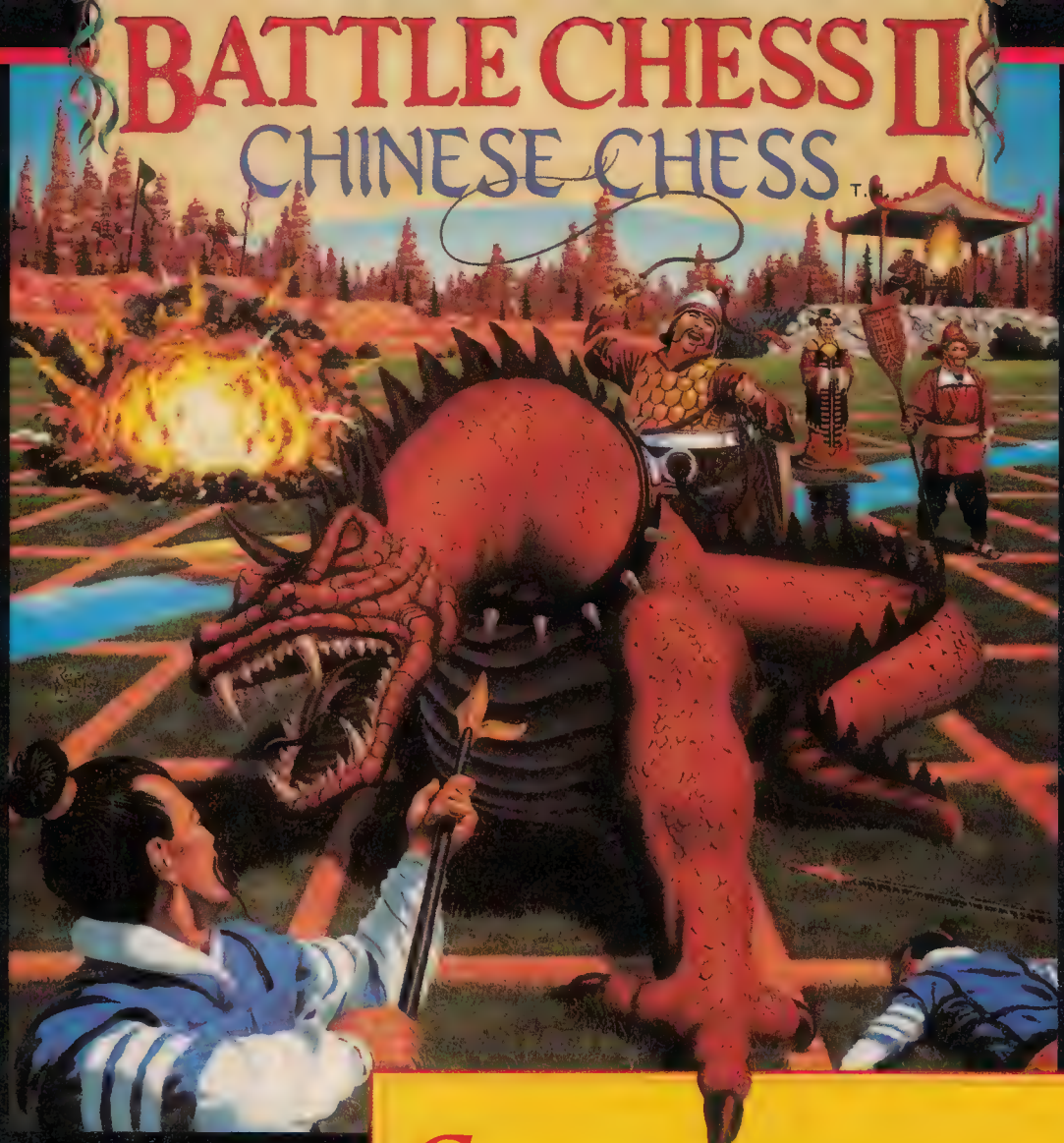
The concept of the hybrid fantasy/strategy game is a good one, since it allows the designer to borrow the best elements from two genres and mingle them freely without the constraints of historic accuracy. When this sort of thing is done well, the result can be a deep, compelling game.

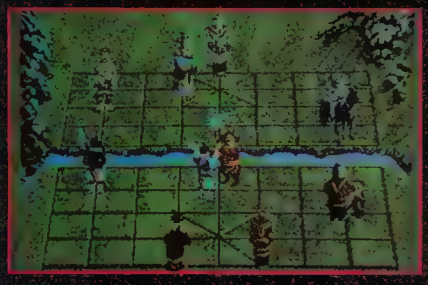
In *Rings of Medusa* from **Digitek**, much of the strategy is economic — at least to begin with. You assume the role of Cirion, a young king who just got dethroned by the armies of the evil queen Medusa, and your objectives are to amass enough financial resources to raise an army, then recapture your kingdom. The latter goal requires that you also scour the countryside for the five "rings of Medusa," possession of which will enable you to summon the demon queen and fight her.

Since you start off with no money and are likely to be waylaid and plundered with depressing regularity by the bad guys, it takes a while to become economically viable. You build your fortune the way any two-fisted capitalist would do it: by sharp trading, a willingness to gamble, and robbing caravans. It doesn't hurt if you run across a few mines either. Once you have the funds to hire an army, you can start recapturing towns and castles.

But by that time, you may not care. Despite an imaginative concept and colorful graphics, *Rings of Medusa* is simply not up to professional standards. The manual is full of misspellings and poor grammar and style. The interface is poor — the whole game is icon-driven, but the icons themselves are just fuzzy little blurs; map movement is difficult; the timescale is unrealistic; and the game system itself is full of awkward, badly conceived elements. This one is for fanatics of the genre only.

BATTLE CHESS II
CHINESE CHESS™





Actual IBM Screens Pictured

Cannons thunder, chariots race over grassy fields, and dragons hurl fireballs at opposing forces in the latest animated strategy game from Interplay Productions. Battle Chess II: Chinese Chess™, an ancient cousin to western chess, features stunning graphics, realistic sound effects, and more humorous animation than the original Battle Chess™. Watch as dragons toast hapless knights, counselors flatten pawns with enormous mallets hidden in their robes, and cannons merrily blast away at opponents cowering behind other pieces. Some of the many features included in Battle Chess II: Chinese Chess are:

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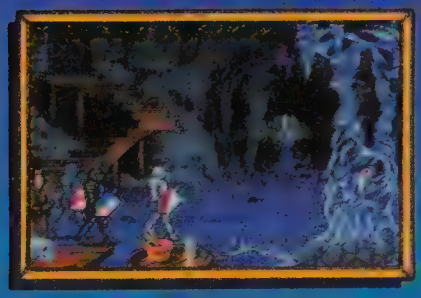

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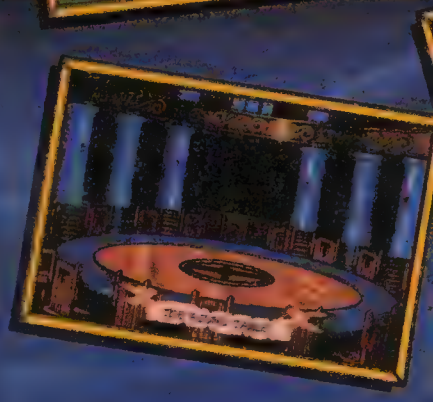

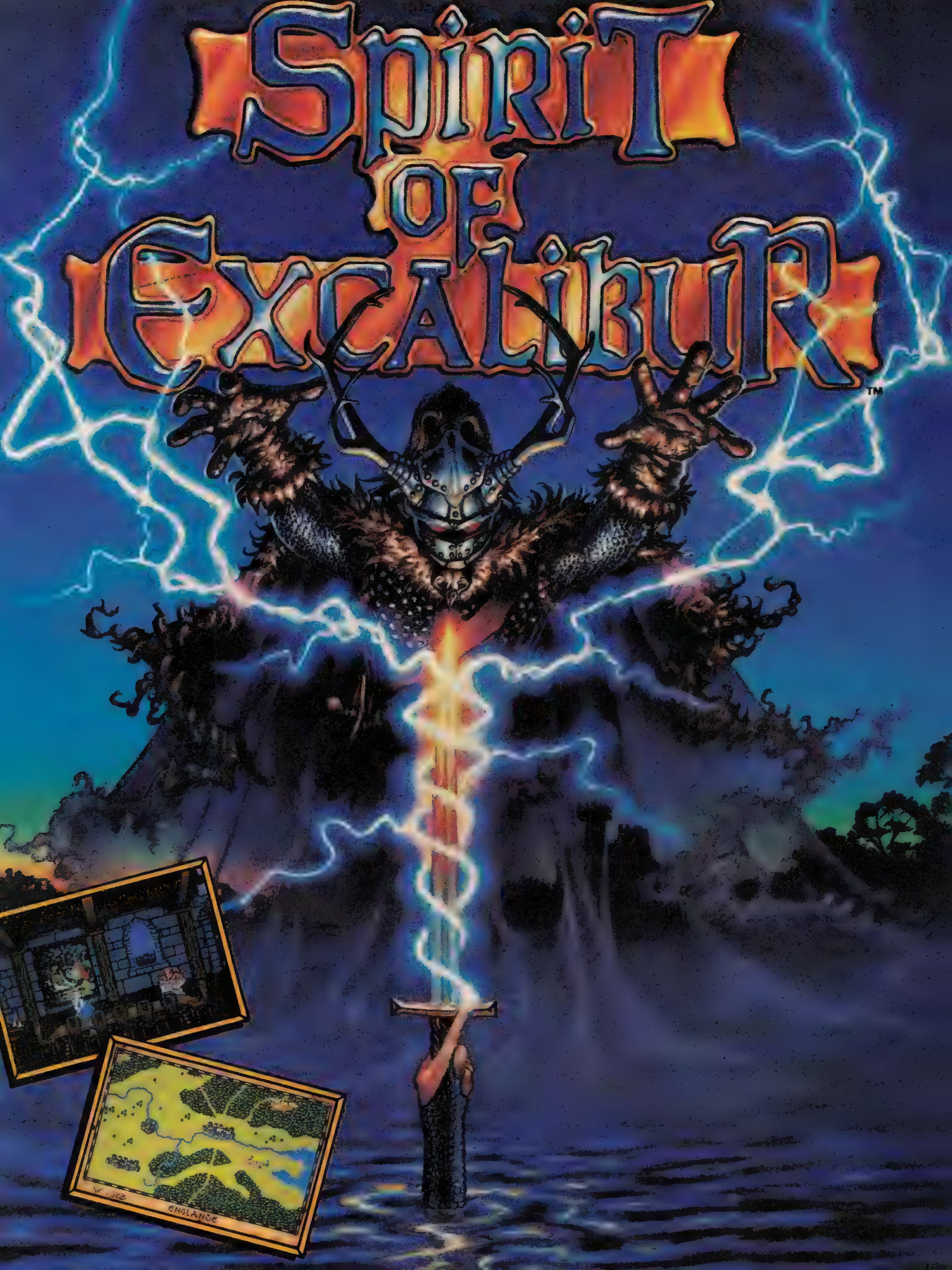
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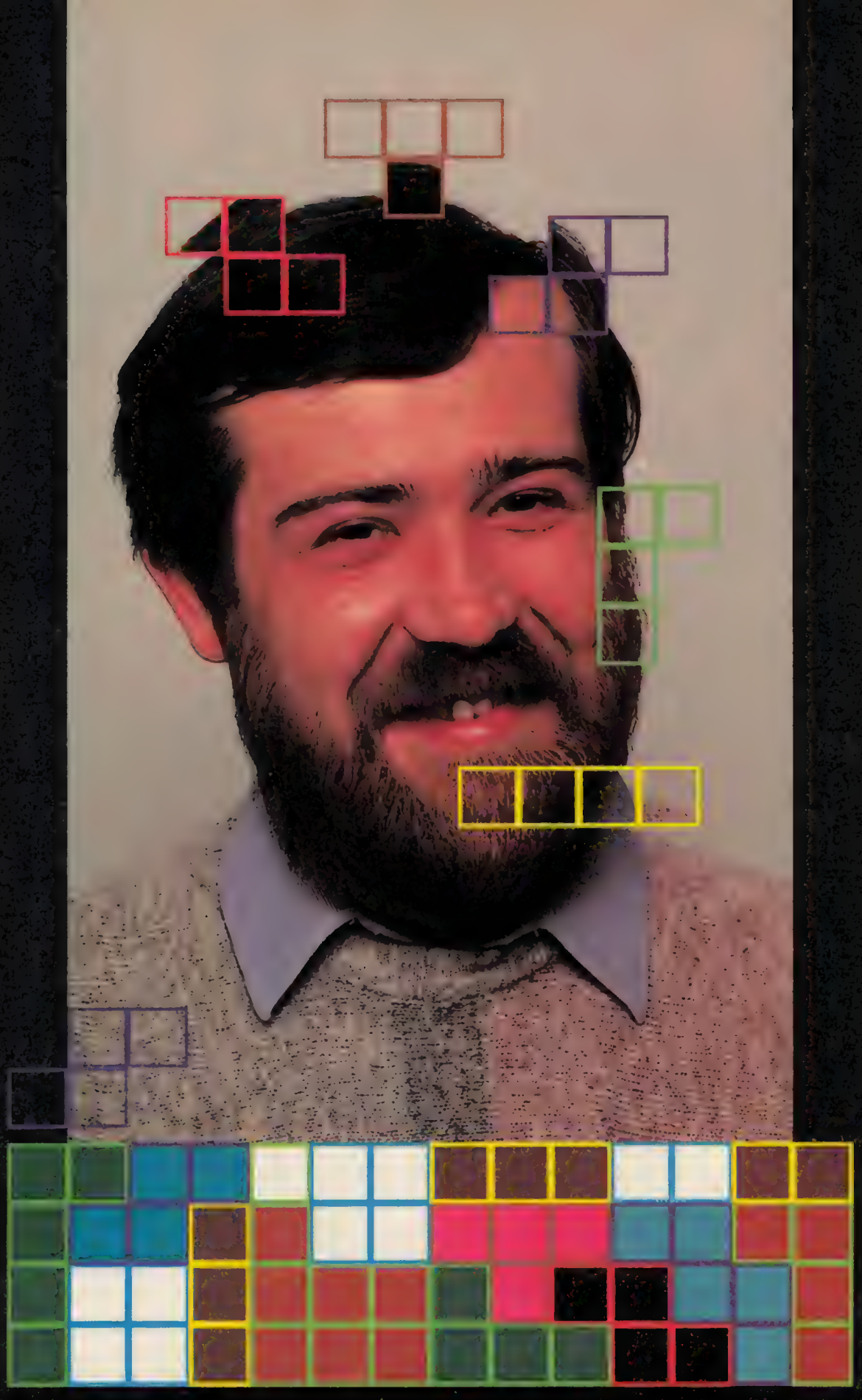


ALEXEY PAJITNOV:

"TRISING" HIS WAY TO THE TOP

About the same time that *glasnost* entered the vernacular, a game was published that addicted computer gamers everywhere. By the summer of 1988, it would have been difficult to find anyone with access to a PC who wasn't playing *Tetris*. The game's popularity was amazing not only because of its simplicity, but also because it arrived in North America from behind the Iron Curtain — its designer, Alexey Pajitnov, is a scientific assistant for the Soviet Academy of Sciences.

In *Tetris*, blocks of various shapes descend. You must pile the blocks in a row so as not to leave any gaps. Each row you fill falls from the screen, opening any gaps immediately below. As the number of filled rows increases, the blocks start falling faster and faster. When the column is filled to the top, the game is over.

Tetris was designed on a Soviet copy of a U.S. computer that was years out of date. Pajitnov hired a 16-year-old programmer to write the version for personal computers. Its popularity quickly spread throughout the Eastern bloc countries until it was seen in Budapest by Robert Stein, a British software agent. He sold *Tetris* to California software publisher Spectrum HoloByte.

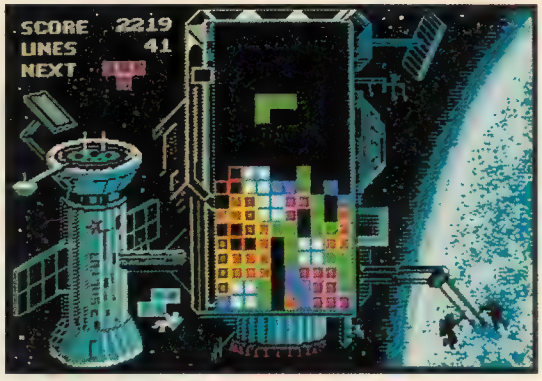
The simple little mind bender unleashed a storm of controversy. *Tetris* was almost immediately translated for the Nintendo Entertainment System, where lawsuits erupted over licensing. At least one software company that produced a *Tetris* clone was forced to halt its game's distribution.

When the smoke cleared, *Tetris* had won countless awards, among them four Software Publishers' Association (SPA) awards — including Best Entertainment Program and Best Original Game Achievement. (In addition, its translation to the portable Game Boy machine won the *Game Player's* award for best Game Boy game of the year). Nintendo has such confidence in its appeal to every member of the gaming audience that *Tetris* is sold with every Game Boy — a base of nine million in the U.S. by the end of 1990.

The game's success shot Pajitnov to fame in the business world, despite the fact that few of his fellow Soviets are able to enjoy *Tetris* at home. In a 1989 article on computer hackers in the Soviet Union, *Newsweek* estimated that there were about 100,000 personal computers in the U.S.S.R., or one for every several thousand people (compared to the United States, where one out of every eight people own a PC). The article also reported that "as many as 30 percent of all Soviet-made computers are defective right out of the box."

"I can say that we are in progress," Pajitnov says. "Really we have no personal computers. We have a very great deficit and need them extremely. But really computers stay only in the scientific institutes or laboratories and in education — not in offices. I don't know... maybe in the military."

Pajitnov lives in Moscow with his wife (an English-language teacher), and two sons, ages 7 and 3. He considers the Computing Center of the U.S.S.R. Academy of Sciences to be one of the best and most powerful institutes of computer sciences in his country. In the past, Pajitnov has worked on voice recognition and CAD/CAM (Computer-Aided Design/Computer-Aided Manufacturing) projects, but for the past five years, he says, "My real job is only games." It may be hard to imagine the Academy granting the freedom to program games, but as he explains, "I made a lot of money for them and they don't touch me — that's all!"

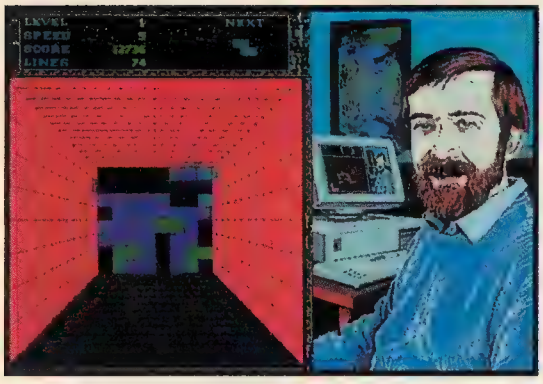


In Tetris, *the background changes with each new level. Press F4 for a description of what you're seeing.*

Last year, Pajitnov produced his second "tris" game, *Welltris*, a somewhat complex, 3-D spin-off of *Tetris*. *Welltris* takes the columnar concept of *Tetris* one step further. Here the blocks fall into a pit, and

you can move them into position from any of the four sides. Any piece that folds up onto the column wall freezes that wall for several moves. When all four walls are frozen, the game is over.

You don't have to stack the blocks upward in *Welltris*, and you can split blocks into different shapes by dropping them into place from around a corner. It makes the game easier for novices, while experts can choose a mode that includes hard-to-fit blocks as well as the familiar shapes.

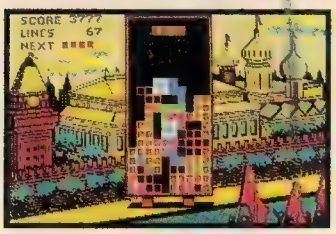


When you curve a piece onto a wall, the wall turns red and freezes for several turns.

Pajitnov's newest game, *Faces: Tris III*, promises continued success not only for him, but also for Spectrum HoloByte. In *Faces*, the blocks that fall into a five-block-wide column are parts of a countenance — chin, lips, nose, eyes, and hair. Players try to make "perfect" faces, but mismatched pieces are often joined as well.

Each piece that falls out of order — a nose on a chin, for example — forms a solid block which can only be removed when a full face is formed above it. Perfect faces remove all the blocks below it; mismatched countenances take one block with them when they fall from the screen. Adding to the fun are the different categories of faces: world leaders, writers, musicians, scientists, horror creatures, and so on.

Clear the bottom of the well entirely during the course of a Welltris *game, and you'll earn a huge bonus.*



The blocks really fall quickly by the time you reach the Kremlin, but you can open an important space by dropping that piece into the space at the far left.

Where does Pajitnov get ideas for his puzzle games? Certainly not from the games he plays. He regards himself as a very strong game player, although he doesn't spend much time in the arcade or shoot-em-up genre. "I like adventures such as the Sierra games. I love very much *King's Quest IV*." Because the text of the games are written in English, Pajitnov must spend time translating. While his English is excellent, he says that understanding American slang expressions is especially challenging for him and his colleagues.

Despite his lack of interest in arcade-style games, Pajitnov has a Nintendo system at home. What he likes best about it is watching his son play. "We spent maybe two weeks or more playing *Zelda*. I can say that maybe I'm a strange parent, but I have a very good contact with my first son discussing how to figure out some goal inside the game.

"It's very serious for him, and we are serious about our man-to-man discussions of these problems. It [*Zelda*] is a puzzle, and I can see what kind of mind he has in solving these puzzles. I can see how he will make decisions. I think it's important to play together with your children not only out of 'parent debt' [to your children], but because it is fun and interesting — much more interesting and much more active than discussing TV or movies, because you are actually doing something together."

Faces was designed with Pajitnov's friend and business partner, Vladimir Pokhilko, who has a Ph.D. in psychology. "It is our position not to make destroying games," Pajitnov says. "We try to make games with constructive elements which help people to build ... to make something. With *Faces*, you really create something, and it's very challenging to construct a whole face from the parts. Many of the faces are of famous people, so it's also very light educational software."

Style is important to Pajitnov. He doesn't loathe shoot-em-ups; he just prefers the interaction and thinking that characterize what he terms "mind games." Ask him to name his favorite game, though, and you'll be surprised: "*Lode Runner* by Broderbund is absolutely my favorite computer game." [*Lode Runner* is a 1983 PC game in which the player is a miner hunting treasure by solving puzzles and drilling through stone walls.]

If you can drop Mona Lisa's *hair into place, you'll have completed a perfect face and all the solid blocks under her head will disappear.*

Pajitnov is philosophical about the sweeping changes in his country. "Sometimes I agree with Gorbachev and sometimes I get very upset. But basically I can say that I support him almost every time. Software people, programmers, and hardware engineers — we are the first who can really feel the results of perestroika because we are the first to create some kind of free market for software in the Soviet Union. We are the first to make close contact with the Western world because we are on the top of technology."

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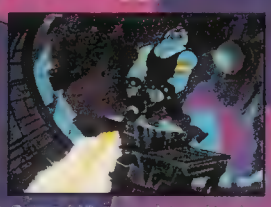
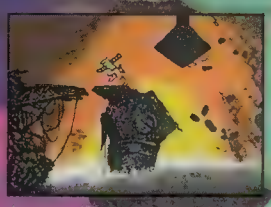

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FACES.

THE APPEARANCE OF A GREAT NEW LOOK

LESLIE MIZELL

Of course, there's only so much you can do with falling blocks. And Alexey Pajitnov had big *Tetris*-sized boots to fill when he developed his third game for **Spectrum HoloByte**. The result? Pajitnov took *Tetris*, changed the different blocks into parts of a face, and created an old game with a new look.

The enigmatic options screen is one of the most colorful in the game.

In *Faces ... Tris III*, you have a pit that's five columns wide. Two pieces of a face — either the chin, lips, nose, eyes, and top — fall into the pit. You can transpose the two pieces, but you can't control them individually. You can also flip the two pieces to see two alternate personalities.

For example, in level 2 (Modern World Leaders) Thatcher's chin might fall on the left and Gorbachev's nose on the right. You're building Gandhi on the left, and you need a nose. You can transpose the pieces to get the nose on the left side of the screen, then flip them to see if Gandhi's nose is an alternate choice.

When a piece lands, one of three things happen. It can land on a matching piece, putting you one step closer to a perfect face. It can land on a different personality but in the correct order, in which case you have a mismatched face. Or it can land out of order (a nose on a chin, for example). In that case, it forms a solid block, and you have to start building on it all over again. When any column in the pit fills with fragmentary pieces of face and solid blocks, the game is over.

Of course, it's possible to get rid of the solid blocks. Every time you complete a mismatched face, one solid block disappears, along with the pieces of that face. If you complete a *perfect* face, all the solid blocks underneath that face disappear, uncovering either the floor of the pit, or the last facial piece that landed.

Naturally, as the game progresses, the blocks start falling faster and faster. You have to complete 11 faces (mismatched or perfect) to finish level 0; each subsequent level is finished when you've completed ten more faces.

Although *Faces* could be perceived as a mindless time-filler, there's a surprising amount of strategy involved for a serious player. It's easy to see why: You've got a pit five blocks wide and blocks that fall over the second and fourth position. You can't move them individually while both are falling,

It sometimes seems that more pieces will fall for one face than the other three or four.

but you have to be able to complete faces in all five columns. So obviously, most of the strategy involves ways of moving the blocks where you need them.

For example, the pieces of the different faces are of different heights — the Caucasian man's chin in level 0 is taller than the Hispanic girl's. The trick, then, is to drop the man's lips into place, then zip the remaining block (assuming it represents the girl's lips) over her chin. You can also move the blocks separately if you can get a column between them.

There's one more move that's a little trickier, but still very effective. If one of the falling pieces completes a face, at least five blocks are going to fall out of that column. If you're quick with the keyboard or joystick, you can move the remaining block all the way across the screen — even into the column in which the other block landed — after the newly completed face disappears.

J. R. R. Tolkien's

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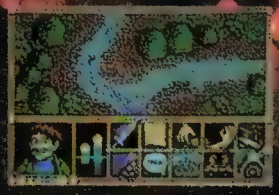

IBM screens pictured.

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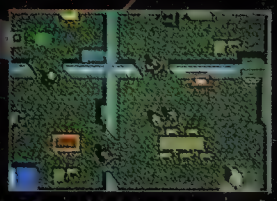

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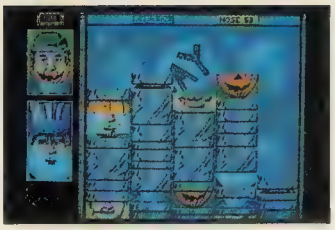
If you can move one piece to the left of the second column, you can move the other piece to any of the three columns on the right.

Perfect faces become harder to complete in the upper levels not only because the blocks are falling faster, but also because there are more personalities in the higher stages of the game. Levels 0 and 1 have just four faces, levels 2-4 have five, levels 5-9 have six. But wait! Have you played the game dozens of times and still not caught a glimpse of Armstrong, Tolstoy, or MacArthur?

Here's where the advanced level comes in. If you choose the advanced level from the option screen, you'll see at least seven new personalities starting with level 2 — assuming you last long enough, that is.



You can skip to any level from the option screen — it may be your only chance to match a perfect face in level 9.

There are even two options in *Faces* that weren't included in either of Pajitnov's earlier games. Up to ten players can compete using the tournament mode, or two players can go head-to-head using a modem. You can even design your own new faces or edit existing ones if you have a graphics program such as *DeluxePaint II*.

Faces is truly an enjoyable game (especially for fans of *Tetris* and *Welltris*), but there are a few minor problems. For example, we never got to see Catherine the Great or the other advanced personalities because a bug in the system prevented us from choosing the advanced mode, although we tried installing the program and running it from both the 5 1/4 and 3 1/2-inch disks included with the package.

If you have Hercules or CGA graphics, you also might be in trouble. The limited graphics capabilities of your machines might make it impossible for you to recognize the personalities — and Hercules users are in even greater straits because they won't be able to use the color-coding of the different segments to help match parts of the same face.

But this is just quibbling. *Faces* is a game for puzzle lovers. If you played *Tetris* until your eyeballs started rotating, you're going to spend just as much time matching features with *Faces*.

Well, the Face Is Familiar...

Emily Dickinson or Susan B. Anthony? Catherine the Great or Marie Antoinette? Cupid or Baby New Year? If you're having trouble recognizing some of the faces in their computer forms, you're not alone. Later game manuals are expected to include the names along with pictures of the perfect faces, but for those of us with early editions, playing "Name that Face" can be more challenging than level 9 of Faces. *So here's a list of the perfect faces.*

Level 0
Universal Faces

01 Asian woman
02 Caucasian man
03 Black man
04 Hispanic woman

Level 1
Modern World Figures

05 Margaret Thatcher
06 Mao Tse-Tsung
07 Indira Gandhi
08 Mikhail Gorbachev

Level 2
Faces from Art

09 Leonardo's *Mona Lisa*
10 Velazquez's *Maids of Honor* (detail)
11 Van Gogh's *Self-Portrait*
12 Wood's *American Gothic* (male)
13 Wood's *American Gothic* (female)

Level 3
Scientists

14 Marie Curie
15 Galileo Galilei
16 Sir Isaac Newton
17 Andrei Sakharov
18 Albert Einstein

Level 4
Musicians

19 Ludwig von Beethoven
20 Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
21 Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky
22 Vladimir Horowitz
23 Igor Stravinsky
24 Louis Armstrong

Level 5
Historic Americans

25 Sitting Bull
26 Susan B. Anthony
27 Frederick Douglas
28 Abraham Lincoln
29 Benjamin Franklin
30 George Washington Carver

Level 6
Literary Figures

31 William Shakespeare
32 Mark Twain
33 Gertrude Stein
34 Alexander Solzhenitsyn
35 Fyodor Dostoyevsky
36 Miguel de Cervantes
37 Leo Tolstoy

Level 6
Monsters

38 Medusa
39 Werewolf
40 Frankenstein's Monster
41 Mummy
42 Witch
43 Vampire
44 Troll

Level 7
Historic Figures

45 Vladimir Ilyich Lenin
46 Elizabeth I
47 Henry VIII
48 Napoleon Bonaparte
49 Genghis Khan
50 Joan of Arc
51 Douglas MacArthur
52 Catherine the Great

Level 9
American Holidays

53 Easter Bunny (Easter)
54 Santa Claus (Christmas)
55 Uncle Sam (4th of July)
56 Pilgrim (Thanksgiving)
57 Jack o'Lantern (Halloween)
58 Leprechaun (St. Patrick's Day)
59 Cupid (Valentine's Day)
60 U.S. Veteran (Veteran's Day)

GP

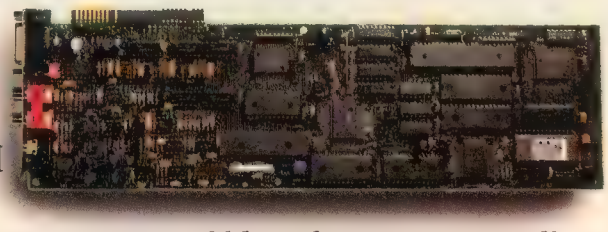
Before the LAPC-1 Music Card

After the LAPC-1 Music Card

Actual results may vary.

If we were you, we sure as heck wouldn't run out and buy an LAPC-1 without knowing something about what it does. So if you give us a moment, we'll tell you.

The LAPC-1 is a music synthesizer card which, when you stick it into your computer, takes the pitifully anemic sounds computer games offer up and turns them into something quite extraordinary. Or, to put it another way, instead of going "plink" the way it does now, your computer will go "KA-PHLOOM" the way it's supposed to. And as luck and our ingenious engineers would have it, it'll do all this with the games from Sierra®, Activision®, MediaGenic®, Lucasfilm®, Access®, MicroProse®, and nearly everybody else.



And since the LAPC-1 uses the same L/A Synthesis circuitry we put in our professional musical equipment, combined with the only true MIDI interface on the market, it also provides you with something else—access to all of the tools you need for creating incredibly realistic music as well.

There. We're done. Now you can run out and buy one.

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COMPUTER CHESS COMES OF AGE

SELBY BATEMAN

"A computer chess program today defeated the reigning international Grandmaster of chess, becoming the first such electronic program since the dawn of computers to beat the world's best human chess player."

You're going to hear or read that news item one day in the not-too-distant future. It hasn't happened yet, and it won't happen tomorrow. Only a few months ago, world chess champion Gary Kasparov handily defeated the latest in a series of ever-more-powerful computer chess programs, a calculating colossus named Deep Thought that was developed by a band of computer chess wizards at Carnegie-Mellon University and more recently bought by IBM. Despite Kasparov's victory, the electronic foes get tougher every day.

That particular victory of Machine over Man will mark a symbolic point in the continuing relationship between humans and computers, and it's one example of just how intertwined are the worlds of chess and computers. But most of us pawn-pushers and would-be wizards already have all that we can handle — and then some — trying to wring an occasional victory from the computer chess programs now available in a variety of formats.

For chess players of all ranks, the 1980s was a decade during which remarkable advances occurred in the quality, number, and power of electronic chess-playing programs. In the process, the methods by which beginners learn the game and experienced players study the game have changed radically. For the first time in the more than 2,000-year-old history of chess, a player can sit down and play, replay, study, switch sides, set up sample positions, pose problems, and much more with a tireless, always ready, non-human opponent-teacher that can be set to play at varying ability levels with the simple change of a setting.

Sargon IV's three-dimensional chessboard makes a striking appearance in VGA graphics mode.

For those of us who learned to play chess before the age of computers, the arrival of computer chess has been a revelation.

A CHESS PLAYER'S SMORGASBORD

Dedicated electronic chess machines now come in all shapes and sizes, from plastic, wallet-style portable chess companions that literally fit into your pocket to luxurious hand-crafted, burnished-wood, table-top chessboards with rows of LED (light-emitting diode) lamps, remote sensors, plug-in modules, and an awesome ability to analyze, solve problems, teach, and replay. Companies such as Saitek Industries and Fidelity Electronics offer heavy-hitting lineups of dedicated chess computers that are marvels of high-tech efficiency and microtechnology.

Saitek boasts its lineup of Kasparov Chess Computers, using the current world champion's name and face to promote a rich assortment of chess-playing units. Fidelity, the best-known name in U.S. chess computers, has its own line of computers. Fidelity was recently purchased by the German company, Mephisto, widely acknowledged to make the most powerful chess computers in the world.

For PC owners, perhaps the two best-known computer chess programs are the *Chessmaster* series from Software Toolworks and the *Sargon* series from Spinnaker Software. Both have been around for several years in various forms, the latest being *The Fidelity Chessmaster 2100*, an updated version of the popular *Chessmaster*

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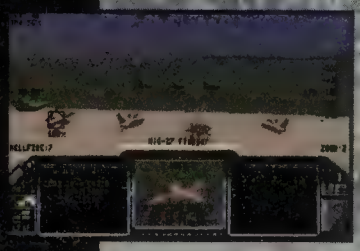

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ELECTRONIC ARTS®

Chessmaster 2100 (shown here in EGA 3D mode) and Sargon can inform players as to which openings and variations are being used.

Sargon's drop-down menu system offers a wide array of options, including any of 16 different levels of play.

2000 that now includes even more powerful chess technology from Fidelity Electronics; and *Sargon IV*, a fourth-generation descendant of the original Sargon chess program.

Both products feature excellent multi-level chess competition programs, with more options and features than a dozen Swiss Army knives. For beginners and somewhat more experienced players, these two chess programs offer so much that it's difficult to imagine what more any player could reasonably want.

Need a hint for your next move? The Chessmaster 2100 here suggests a Knight move to F3.

But beyond these two chess programs for PC owners is an array of more specialized disk-based products for the serious player — for example, those who play regularly in tournaments, clubs, and by mail. At this level, players want to study in-depth the standard books of chess openings, the many variations of those openings, middle- and end-game positions, and even the regular habits of their more frequent opponents.

It's one thing to study a classic game played between Kasparov and Anatoly Karpov in order to get a better feel for the Sicilian Defense. It's quite another to be able to analyze the playing patterns of your most frequent club or tournament (or neighborhood) opponents, and to have a program that will help you devise ways to win in future contests against them.

CHESSMASTER, SARGON, AND BATTLE CHESS

Like a multi-faceted chess problem, it's at first difficult to know where to begin when describing either *Chessmaster 2100* or *Sargon IV*. Both have so much to offer beginners and experienced players alike that you simply can't go wrong buying either program.

Beginners will find that both products offer chess competition programs that can be set from easy to very difficult, and have teaching aids, opening libraries of more than 150,000 positions, time clocks, two-dimensional and three-dimensional display options, libraries of classic games, chess problems, take-back options, and the ability to watch both chess programs "think" about their move options. There are customizing features that range from the useful to the indulgent to the unnecessary — but in virtually all cases, the options are easily set, changed, or ignored.

In fact, both programs have more bells and whistles than the great majority of chess players will probably ever use or need. There are a few options that will appeal to some players more than others, depending on individual preferences. For example, in *Sargon IV*, the "Write a Note" option lets you briefly annotate your games, creating text files that can be transferred later to most word processors.

The "Write A Note" feature in Sargon IV lets you annotate your games for future reference.

Sargon also presents users with a variety of boards and pieces to choose from, including an exceptionally lovely three-dimensional VGA mode. On the other hand, *Chessmaster 2100*, with its souped-up, high-level play from Fidelity Electronics, has a few more features than *Sargon*. In particular, options such as "Show Best Variation" and its on-screen chess tutorial are excellent. (There's even a new version of *Chessmaster* — an excellent implementation — now available for the Nintendo Entertainment System, marketed by Hi-

HARPOON

The best wargame simulation in the world...just got better.

In the few short months since it hit the streets, Harpoon has become the number one, best selling wargame simulation in America. And no wonder. Harpoon is now acknowledged as the ultimate, most startlingly realistic interpretation of how the final war at sea might take place.

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In fact, with the *Scenario Editor* you can decide exactly how you want the final confrontation at sea to take place.

Which is why Harpoon, the best military simulation in the world, just got better!

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Here, Chessmaster offers its opinion on the best variation to take, an excellent study aid for players.

Chessmaster's *War Room screen features a chessboard, move list, the program's "thinking," and captured pieces.*

Help screens are also plentiful and easily accessed in Chessmaster 2100.

This is the final checkmate position from the 1851 Anderssen-Kieseritsky game, one of a hundred classic games available in Sargon IV.

Tech Expressions.) Although *Sargon* and *Chessmaster* rightfully get the lion's share of the press when it comes to full-featured chess games for PC owners, one of the more fanciful and attractive approaches to the royal game is *Battle Chess* from Interplay Productions.

What chess player hasn't daydreamed about actual knights and pawns, bishops and rooks, jousting and slugging it out in physical combat on the chessboard. *Battle Chess* brings to life, in a delightfully colorful animated way, that idea. Make a move, and the three-dimensional piece strides or lumbers to the selected square. Take a piece, and the two pieces involved actually *have at it!* The Queen hurls lightning. The knight's armor clanks as it fights. Defeated pawns and pieces scream as they melt away into oblivion.

For those players who find the physical combat a bit repetitive and delaying after awhile, *Battle Chess* does offer a good two-dimensional chess competition program that boasts an opening library of 30,000 moves. There are ten levels of play, and a modem capability for telephone chess. (There is also a new version of *Battle Chess* from Data East for the Nintendo Entertainment System.)

LET'S GET SERIOUS!

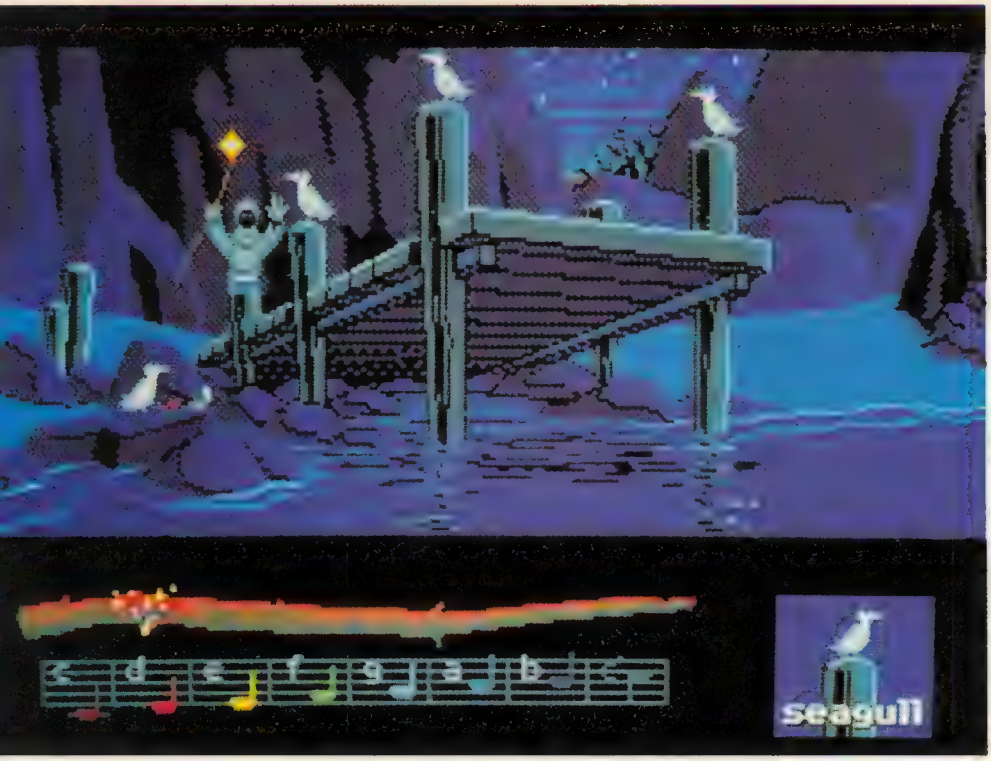
Chess players who find themselves captivated by the challenge and the beautiful intricacies of the game — and their number worldwide is truly staggering — ultimately want more. Serious chess play almost always means meticulous study of openings, variations, middle game positions, end game strategies, and a general absorption over time of as much of the vast body of chess play as the mind can hold.

Those who either don't like or don't play chess probably view such devotion with the same baffled suspicion as the individual in the classic chess cartoon who, watching two unmoving chess players, hears a fellow observer whisper to him, "Watch the fireworks now!"

For PC game players who want to delve more deeply into chess, the options are plentiful. In addition to the many dedicated chess programs available from companies such as Saitek and Fidelity, there are a number of disk-based chess programs that offer a variety of more specialized features than *Sargon* and *Chessmaster*. What the special programs lack in breadth and beauty they more than make up for in depth of study. And then there are also bridge programs that let computer owners link to dedicated chess machines.

For example, Saitek offers the *Chess Base Starter*, a disk-based product for PCs that can be linked to selected dedicated chess programs in the Kasparov line such as the Leonardo, Galileo, and Renaissance chess computers. The *Chess Base* program lets you save games on disk for replay in high-resolution graphics, print out positions, swap sides, mark positions, and more. There are 367 World Championship games from 1783 to 1988 that are included for study and for transfer to the Kasparov chess computers.

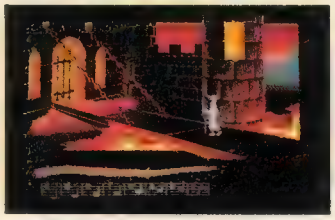
Several different specialized chess programs for your PC are available from Chess Laboratories (P.O. Box 3541, South Pasadena, California 91031). For example, the



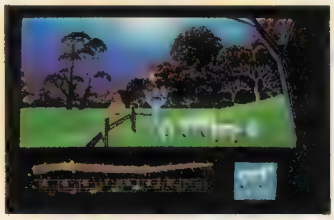
The game is fantasy. The interface is magic.

Alone on a craggy hilltop, high above an island shrouded in perpetual mist, your quest begins. But tread gingerly, because while the world of *Loom*™ is breathtakingly beautiful, unspeakable danger awaits the unsuspecting.

Trepidation soon gives way to bravado as you peek inside abandoned tents in the village. Stumbling over a discarded weaver's distaff, you watch in wonder as it gradually glows and resonates with a sequence of musical notes. Tentatively at first, you point the staff and repeat the notes. After considerable experimentation, you may discover the power to see in the dark. Or weave straw into gold. And eventually find the means to leave the island itself.



Not all the Guilds welcome strangers.



A spell weaver's power is not for the sheepish.

A fantastic odyssey ensues, as menacing waterspouts, merciless dragons and exotic cities draw you deeper and deeper into the fantasy. Armed with the distaff's magic power, you stride fearlessly across vast, cinematic landscapes. Seeking the arcane knowledge possessed by the Great Guilds, accumulated and refined since the dawn of time.

Typing is banished from this kingdom.

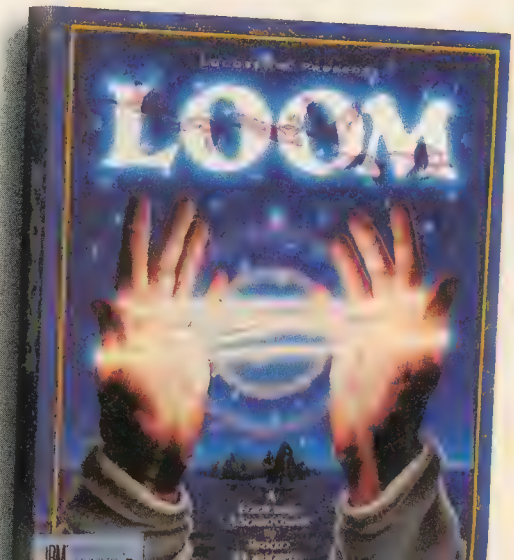
Loom is more than a masterpiece of fantasy storytelling. With *Loom,* Lucasfilm™ Games literally redefines the fantasy computer game experience. Simple point n' click actions move your character, select objects, and perform magic. No cumbersome keystrokes, text parsing, maze mapping, or inventory management intrude to break the spell.

We even transport you to the Age of the Great Guilds before you turn on the computer. With a lavishly produced, 30-minute drama on Dolby® Stereo audio cassette that's included with the game. Recorded by Lucasfilm's Academy Award-winning Sprocket Systems, it introduces the characters and sets the scene for the impending, epic struggle against imposing odds.

Then it's full immersion into *Loom*'s 3-Dimensional, scrolling panoramic landscape. Where detailed animation, high definition graphics, startling special effects and stirring musical score combine to create a total environment. Captivating you from the opening scene to the final climax.

And your quest for a truly magical fantasy adventure is finally realized.

LUCASFILM™ GAMES



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company's *BOOKUP 7*, which has been around in one form or another for over six years, is a chess instructional program used by serious chess players. The $99 program (no shipping and handling charge) lets players study at their own pace through individual games by way of an annotated branching analysis tree. Alternative lines of play are plentiful, the program has mouse support, works with any graphics card, and there's plenty of room for commentary.

Zarkov is another Chess Laboratories product. It's meant to be a chess competition program like *Sargon* or *Chessmaster*, but is stronger. It also will automatically annotate files from the *BOOKUP* database and

In Battle Chess, *warring pieces actually battle on screen before winning or losing.*

can use *BOOKUP* to actually learn from its own analysis so as not to repeat earlier mistakes. *Zarkov 2.0* was released earlier this year, and is available for $75 (no s&h fee).

Another serious chess program, also from Chess Laboratories, is *Chess Reader*, a $49.95 memory-resident PC program that will mark a range of text on-screen and then play through the game and proofread it, or play it back for you. *Chess Reader* is most commonly used by chess journalists as a proofreading tool for accuracy.

It catches illegal moves or notations, and can even spot an incomplete chess notation. For chess players who publish newsletters for their clubs or for tournaments — situations in which one transposed character can be confusing at best — the program is probably worth its weight in gold.

The VGA version of Battle Chess *is even more colorful and detailed.*

NICBase *is an advanced chess analysis tool that offers the serious player a multitude of options for self-study.*

The database screen from NICBase *allows players to search on a wide variety of characteristics to study aspects of thousands of different games.*

Another company involved in serious chess programs is Chess Combination, Inc. (2423 Noble Station, Bridgeport, CT 06608). The company's *NICBase* (New In Chess) is a $128 (no shipping and handling fee) excellent interactive study tool which allows players to analyze an infinite number of games, to organize and classify them by player, by opening, by tournament, and other criteria.

For example, suppose you want to call up a range of chess games that begin with the same opening that you've encountered unsuccessfully in your own games. Study the alternatives, find the winning lines of play, analyze the alternatives, and profit from your learning during the next competition.

NICBase is available for all PC-compatibles with DOS 2.0 or above and a graphics card. Additional disks, containing 600 to 700 games

The Chess Base Starter *from Saitek is a PC program that can connect to several of Saitek's Kasparov chess computers for analysis, printing, and many other options.*

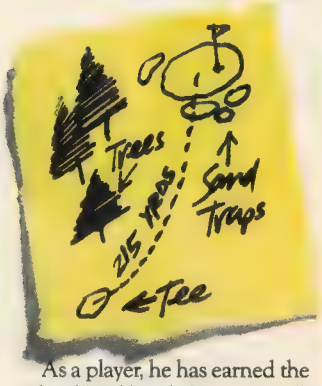
each, are available for $17 each. And the company has a catalog of available disks for customers.

There are a number of other specialized computer chess programs available, primarily from small companies that serve the serious chess market. Interested game players can find more information from the U.S. Chess Federation and its excellent bimonthly magazine, *Chess Life*. In addition, Chess Combination offers *New In Chess Magazine*, which is published eight times a year and does a great job of tracking and providing chess information internationally on tournaments, major players, and related topics.

Whether you're a beginner or an experienced tournament player, the computer chess scene has become a wonderful playground for anyone interested in the royal game.

GP

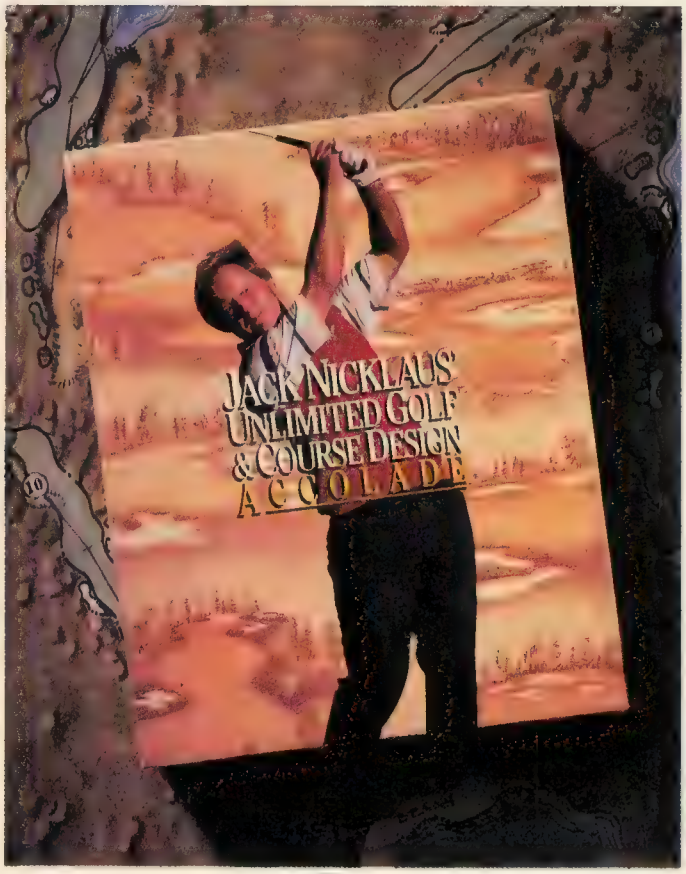
Break New Ground With Jack Nicklaus.



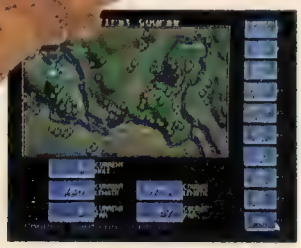
As a player, he has earned the title of "Golfer of The Century." As a golf course designer, his layouts are legendary.

Now The Golden Bear brings forth the best from both of his worlds.

Jack Nicklaus' Unlimited Golf & Course Design™ combines a state-of-the-art golf game with an amazing Course Designer that gives you the power to create any number of breathtaking courses—quickly and easily.

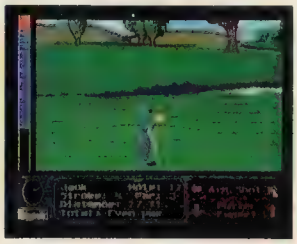


Now you can quite literally play *any golf course in the world*, or design your own "Dream 18." Tees, greens, bunkers, water, hills, trees—virtually every aspect of golf course design is at your fingertips.



There's even a 150-page book filled with Jack's design tips and philosophy—so you can learn from the Master himself.

Two courses—Muirfield Village, one of the Top 10 in the world, and The Bear's Track, a dream course designed by Jack exclusively for the computer—come ready to play. Plus nine other great courses are available from the growing library of Nicklaus course disks.



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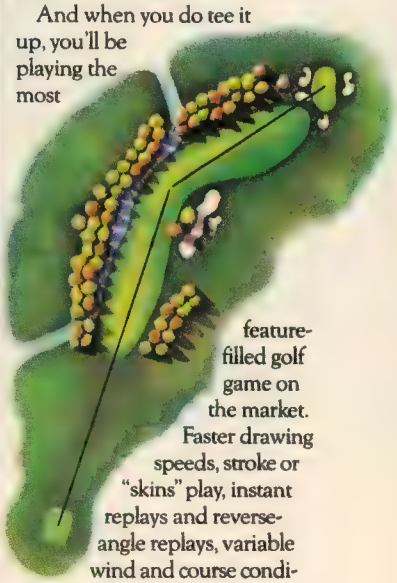

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Actual game screens from IBM PC/VGA version of the game. Other versions may vary.

GARY MEREDITH

Lester P. Manley is going through a change of life. But as he sits in his minuscule office deep in the bowels of the WILL-TV building, he's not yet aware of this fact. He only knows that the "suits" in the conference room need his technical expertise once again. They probably just forgot to plug in something, but at least it gives him an excuse to walk the upper floors. If he's really lucky, he might catch a glimpse of the girl of his dreams, Stella Hart, Mr. Burnbaum's executive assistant.

Les hasn't expected all that much out of life so far. After all, given his background, he feels rather fortunate not to be asking people, "...and would you like fries and a drink with that?" But just once, he'd like to be on the receiving end of the attentions of a girl like Stella. So when station WILL announces its "Search for The King" contest and its $1 million cash prize, Les figured it was now or never. If he had that kind of money, maybe even the notorious Lyla Libido might give him the time of day.

Hardware requirements: 640K minimum memory; VGA, EGA, MCGA, CGA, or Tandy 16-color graphics; 8 Mhz or faster recommended; hard drive recommended; mouse optional.

While the hierarchy at WILL-TV consists of many varied levels, it's a simple matter to tell who's at the top and who's at the bottom. There's no mistaking this as anything but the CEO's executive suite.

Mr. Burnbaum is busy either watching the other stations, watching the insides of his eyelids, or watching Stella file all the W-Z documents. Asking for a raise won't get you any money — but it could get you some keys.

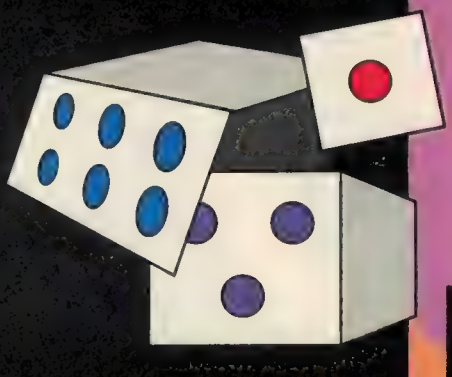
The building guard is more helpful asleep than he is awake. While he's grabbing a few Z's, Les should grab his dream. You never know when he might meet up with someone in need of something to live for.

Your quest really begins out on the street. But watch out for red herrings, such as the mysterious man in white. Don't try to chase him down inside the bus station.

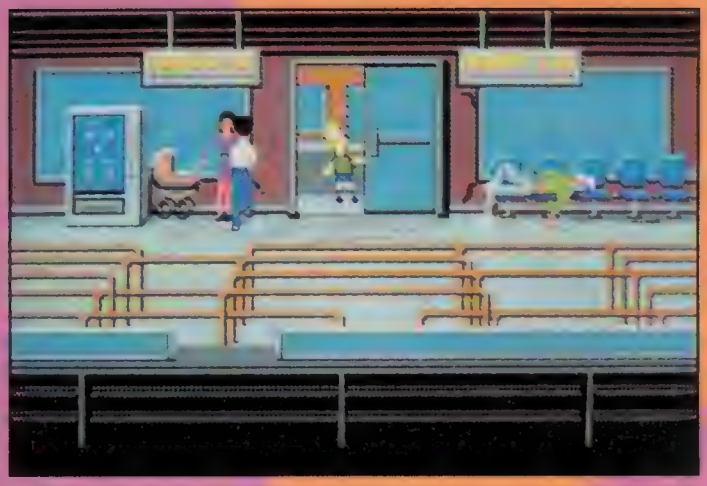
Quiet Desperation Revisited

For years, the nerds of the world had only one champion of their cause — the perennially perplexed Larry Laffer of *Leisure Suit Larry* fame. If anyone could constantly screw up and still come out on top, it was Larry. Now it seems Larry may have met his match. In **Accolade's** *Les Manley in: Search for The King*, we follow our intrepid hero from his humble beginnings as a videotape rewinder to the spotlight on stage at The Kingdom theme park — and beyond.

In between, Les is called upon, among other things, to pose as a reporter, clean up after circus elephants, break into hotel rooms, hobnob with Vegas showgirls, hitchhike across the country — even impersonate The King himself. It's all part of his quest to track down The King, present proof of his existence, and collect the big bucks (and hopefully Stella as well).



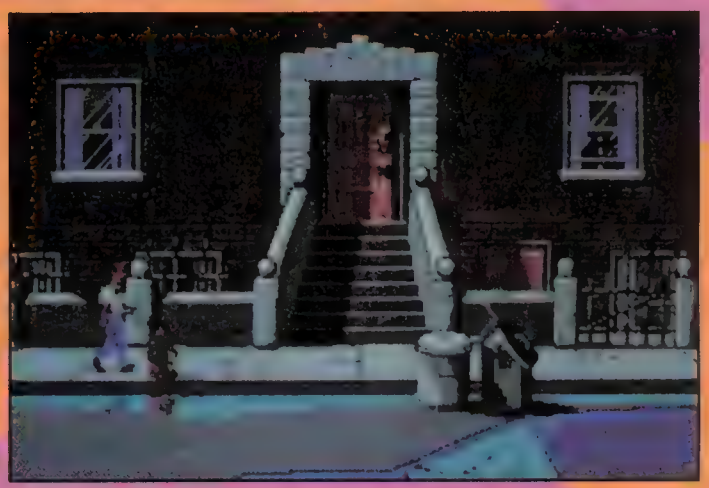
It's amazing the characters you meet in a bus station. Unfortunately, you aren't going to get much help here. Don't waste time trying to negotiate the railing... and don't have a cow, man, when you spot some celebrities.



This bus might be a good way to get to the next destination on your quest. At least it would if it were in running condition, if you could find a driver, and if Vegas had suddenly moved 3,000 miles eastward.

Anyone who has followed the adventures of Larry Laffer will feel right at home with *Les Manley*. The game interface, with its provisions for saving, loading, controlling speed, and so on, looks a bit different from the Sierra games, but works quite similarly. This is a definite plus because you really need to save the game a lot, and a clumsy interface would make that a frustrating exercise.

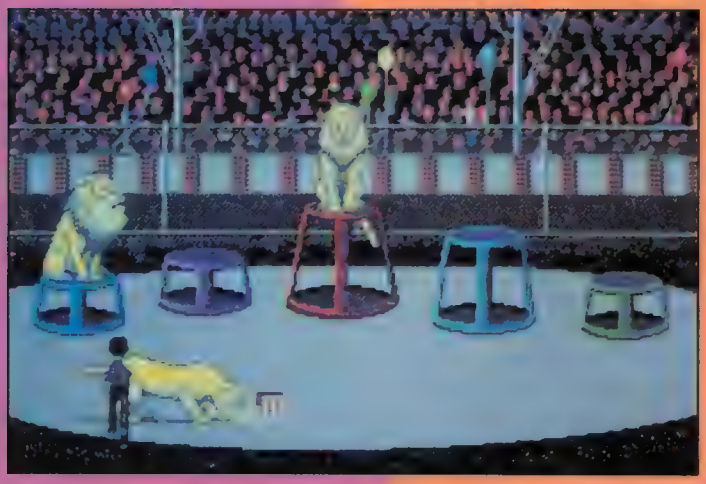
Saving the game often is a sensible move because not only are there are a number of ways in which Les can meet his demise, but you'll also probably find yourself returning to several scenes to pick up a particular item or perform a certain action you neglected the first time through.



This old brownstone is home to a rather eccentric lady and an essential item. If you thoroughly searched the storeroom at WILL-TV, you shouldn't have any problem getting past the door.

From the appearance of her apartment, Bobbi's life must have ground to a halt somewhere around 1977. Her devotion is impressive, but sadly misplaced. Taking the scarf would be doing her a favor.

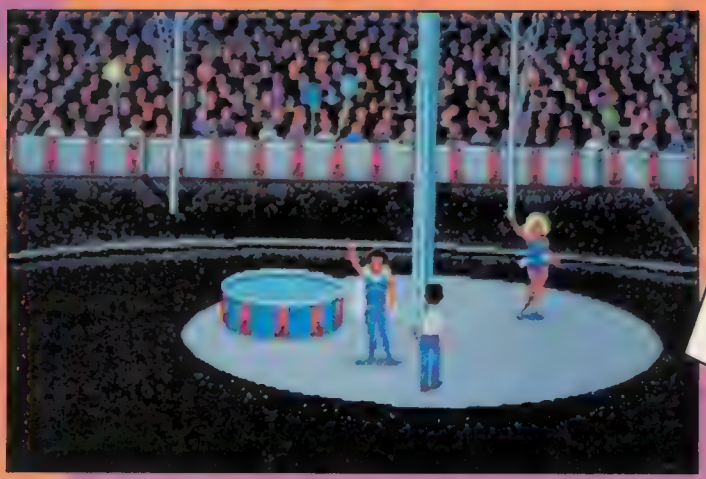
Just let yourself drift back to those carefree days when a trip to the circus was all you asked of life. Try looking at everything. You never know who — or what — might help you win the contest.



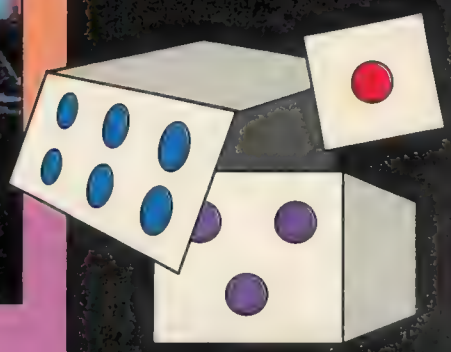
You probably didn't know that popcorn was a favorite of lions the world over. At least, this cat seems fond enough of the snack to let you pass unmolested and unmauled.

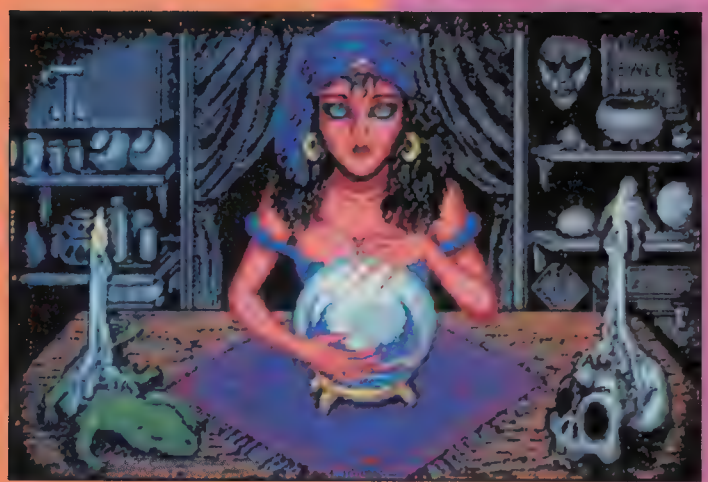
Don't forget to look at everything in a scene — especially since several important items aren't actually visible on the screen. For example, while you're in the WILL-TV building, you spot a guard sleeping at his desk. Normally, you'd just accept that you can't wake him up. But if you don't look at his dream — and take it — you won't get to Las Vegas with everything you need to complete the game.

Talking to everyone you meet can also fill in a lot of blanks in the puzzle. Not everyone is completely cooperative, but at least you don't have to worry about the truthfulness of any statements. Anything you're told is dependable. There aren't any deliberate attempts to mislead, although some of the information might be considered a little less than complete.

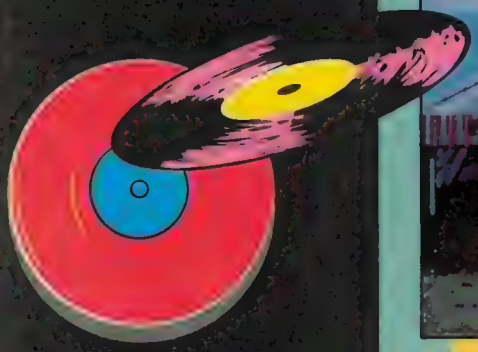


Fred and Alona are both people of few words — at least in English — but speaking to Alona might let you know why the show isn't going on. And until Fred performs, you can't get something from him you desperately need.





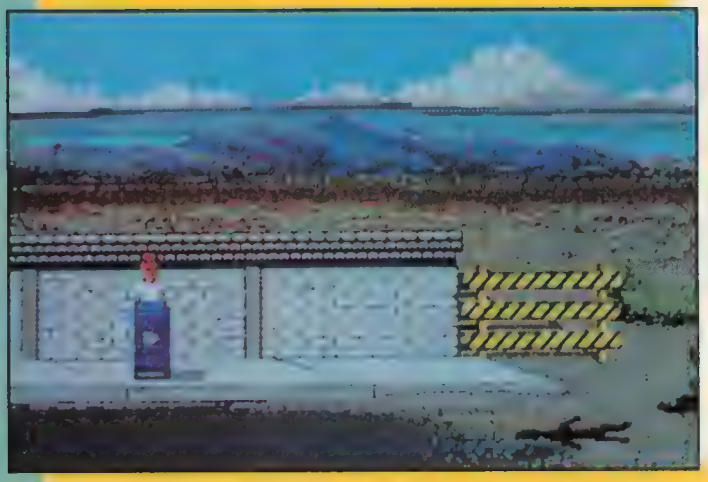
The ravishing and mysterious Mlle. Zarmooska knows all and sees all... for a price. Getting really friendly with her causes her to vanish, leaving you free to find the two items you must have.



If there is a criticism of *Les Manley in : Search for The King*, it's that the designers might be just a bit *too* tricky in scenes such as the one with the sleeping guard. Another example is inside Bobbi's apartment. Bobbi is the woman who first reported sighting The King. She also has a scarf you must have. But to get the scarf, you have to do a certain list of things *in a certain order*. You'll be itching to put your fist through your monitor before you get your fingers on that scarf.

The text parser is also overly sensitive about phrasing and word choice. Compound sentences will only confuse your poor computer, and the distinction between prepositions such as "in" and "on" might mean the difference between success and failure. Then too, the design of this kind of game is an extremely subjective affair. What seems eminently logical to one person may be totally baffling to another.

If you're stumped trying to find a way to Vegas, look no further than the Test-O-Strength booth next to the main tent. The contestant doesn't have enough energy to ring the bell, but he can send ol' Les winging westward.



By now, you've probably realized that Helmut can't take the heat of re-entry. Your Thermos provides one solution to the problem, while the U.S. Postal Service can also help in both transporting Helmut and conserving your water.

What a strange thing to find in Vegas — a casino hotel. Well, what better place to pick up a few clues (and items) than The King's old stomping grounds? You might even meet up with his former flame, Lyla Libido.

The lobby decor takes tackiness to new heights. While the desk clerk won't help you much now, his assistance will be invaluable later on.

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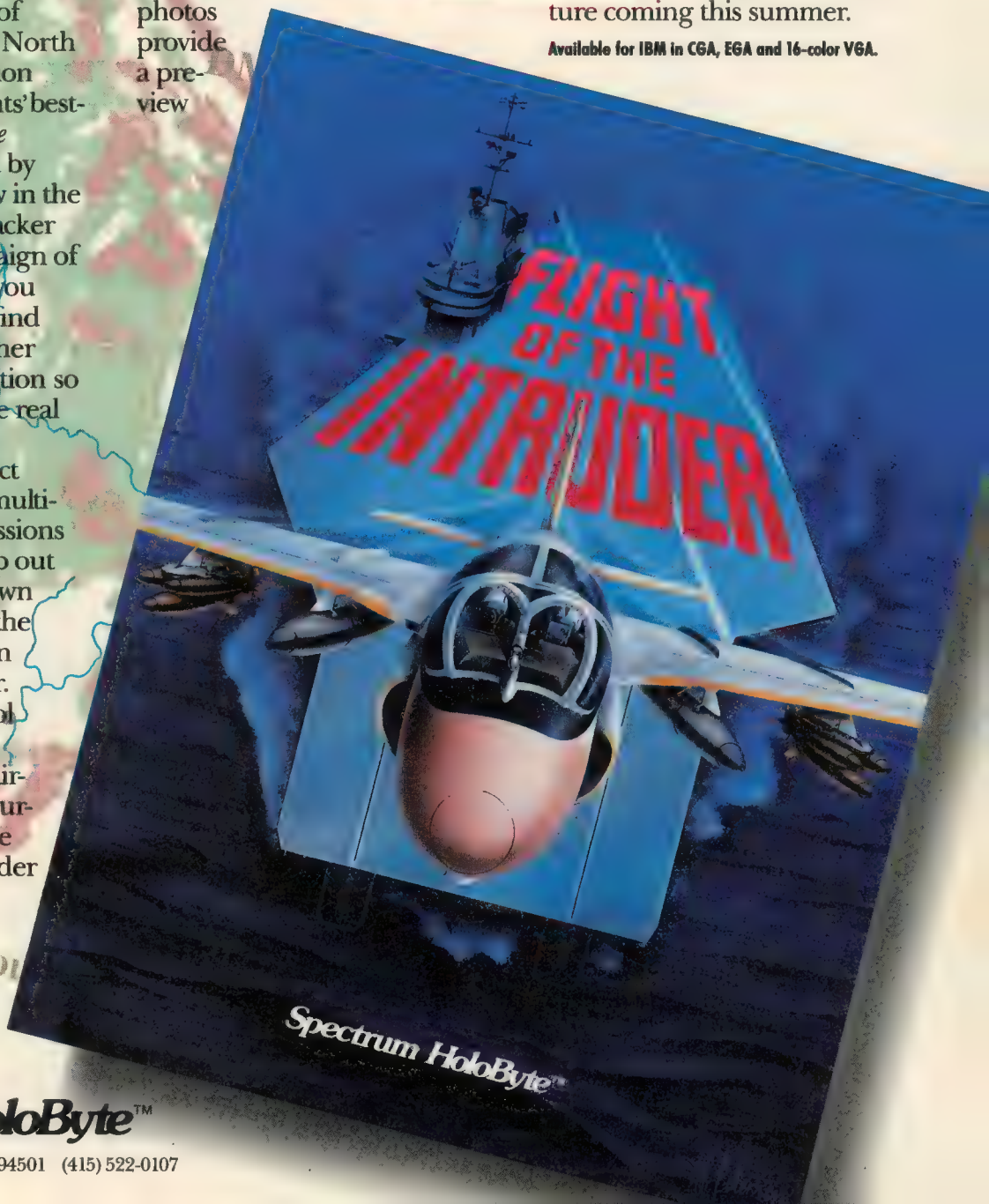

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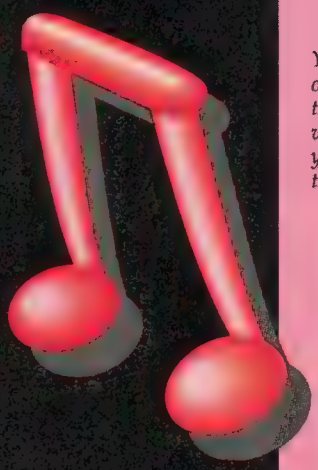
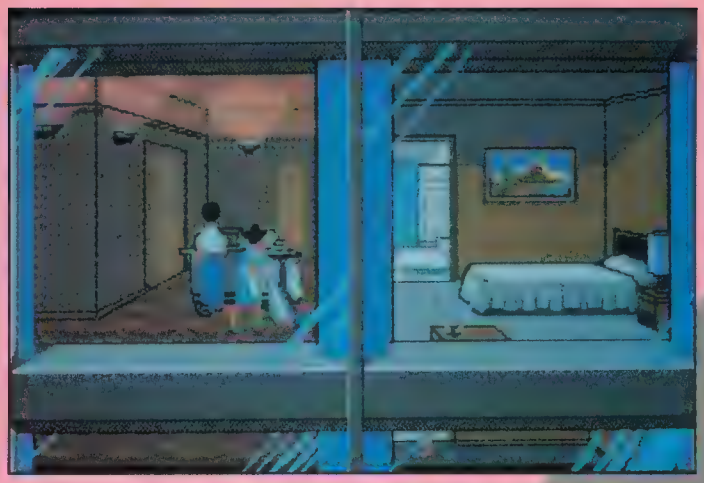


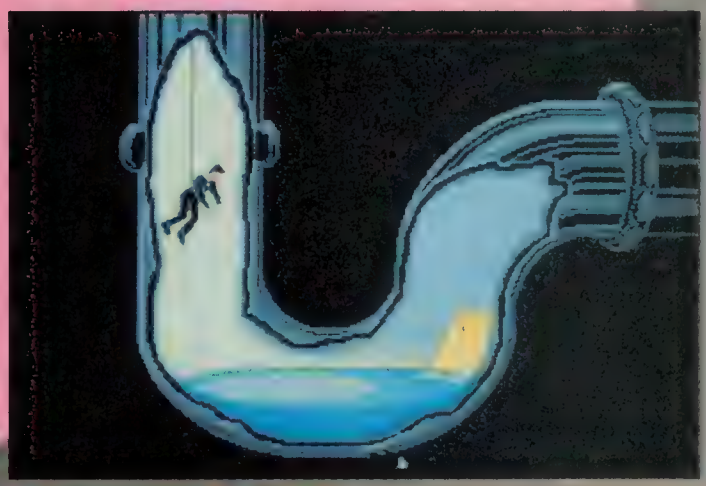
In short, if you can recall the hair you pulled out trying to get Larry from the beach to the airport in *Leisure Suit Larry II*, you have some idea of the mental tangents you may have to take to solve many of Les's problems. There's nothing so tough that you won't eventually arrive at a solution, but you may need a little luck to go along with your gaming prowess.

As with any good mystery, there are a few red herrings (such as the bus or the bus station itself) that can lead you to waste a lot of time trying to do things you don't really need to do. It's a good habit to write down what other characters tell you. Then you can ask questions about any topics mentioned. Finally, you may want to just sit back and consider what has been said and see if any logical connections suggest themselves.



You've got to have the skeleton key on the cart, but how can you distract the maid? Try giving her some extra work to do. While you're in there, you also might want to give serious thought to dental hygiene.

The skeleton key gives you access to every area of the hotel, including the penthouse suite of Mr. Fabulous. Too bad you don't have any idea of what you're looking for here.



The cleaning receipt in the jacuzzi drain might be your ticket to an eventual rendezvous with The King, but the opening is too small for your hand. Helmut can help if you can help him get out of the drain.

There's a lot for you to look at by the pool, but if you're ever going to find The King, you'd better concentrate on drawing Mr. Fabulous away from Lyla Libido. Perhaps you could reach out and touch someone.

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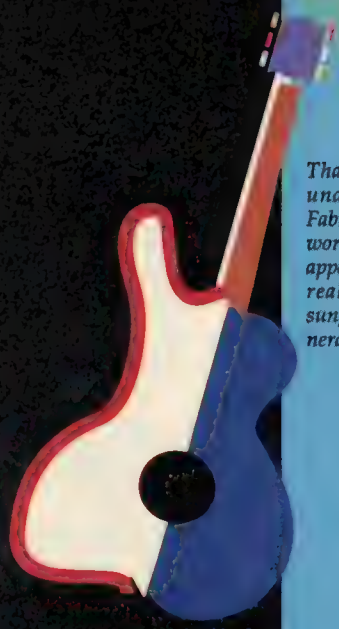

...And It Comes Out Here

In the best tradition of role-playing adventures, *Les Manley in: Search for The King* requires you to work within a mostly logical framework. That is, you must perform tasks which usually lead to other tasks, and so on. Fortunately, the game doesn't take its linearity to an extreme, so if you do get stuck, you can go on to other areas where you might find an item or bit of information to help with a previous scene.

For instance, when Les goes to the circus, he must first earn his ticket into the big top by shoveling behind the elephants. With the ticket, he can enter the tent, but before he can get anywhere, he must somehow acquire popcorn to feed to the lion. Once inside, Les runs smack into another chain of logic when he talks to the acrobats, Fred and Alona.

That phony page was a pretty underhanded way to get Mr. Fabulous out of the way — but it worked! While all Lyla's charms appear to be available to Les, he's really only interested in her sunglasses. Once a nerd, always a nerd.

Ah, the infamous Lyla Libido, former 15-year old mistress to The King himself. Watch out — she's broken stronger men than you just for the fun of it.

Far out, man — a psychedelic counterculture van in mint condition. If this is any indication of how things are going, you may not find The King, but you're almost certain to meet up with Jimi and Janis.

After a '60s time-warp trip to The Kingdom, you finally feel close to The King. There's lot's to see and do at The Kingdom, but Red's is where Les can strut his stuff and gain entrance to The Mansion.

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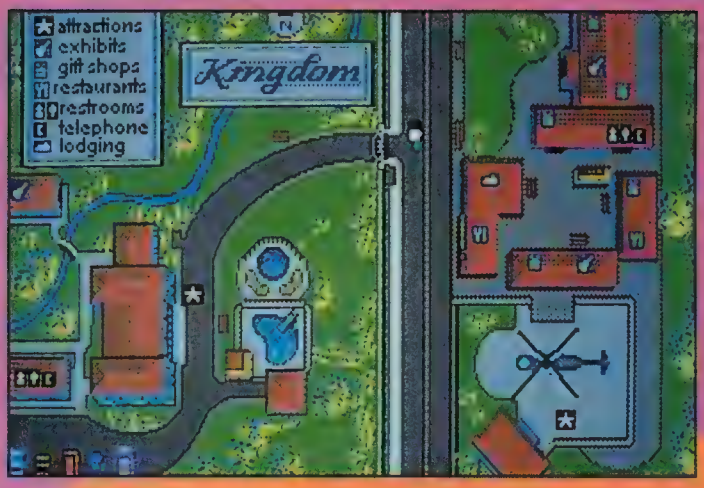
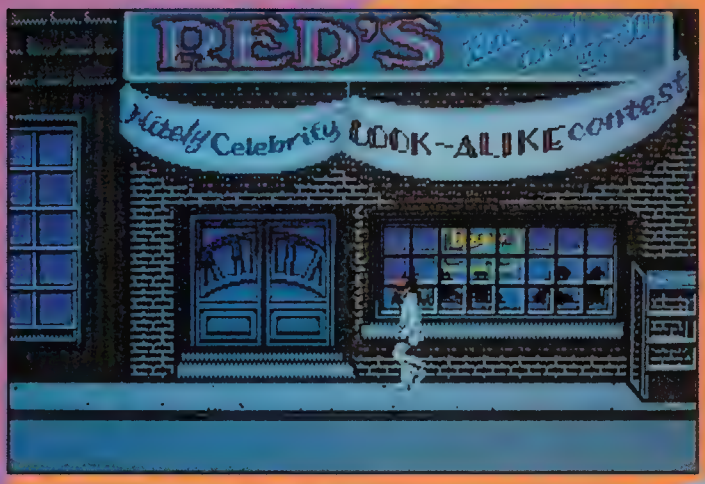


A quick look at your complimentary tourist map tells you everything you need to know about The Kingdom, including where to find the famous Red's Bar and Grill — where all the top impersonators go to be discovered.

Since the ladder to the high dive platform is slippery, Les must find a way for the acrobats to keep their footing. For that, he makes his way to Mlle. Zarmooska, where he's able to snag some candle wax (don't forget to pet the lizard, too). The wax goes to the strongman, Luigi, for his limp moustache. Les can make off with Luigi's rosin bag, which he takes back to Fred. Then Fred is finally able to make his high dive.

Luckily for Les, but unluckily for Fred, it turns out to be the acrobat's final dive. But you've found out what all Les's finagling was about — he's now able to pinch the cape of late and lamented Fred.



If you managed to pick up everything you need along the way, you should be able to emerge from that convenient phone booth with a fairly credible simulation of you-know-who.

You knew The King had been a conspicuous consumer, but this place surpasses your wildest suppositions on his lifestyle. Decorating it must taken every bit of glitter, velvet, and plastic on Rodeo Drive.

The master bedroom is so bright that dark glasses are probably an essential sleep aid. Les, however impressed he may be, should focus his attention on the bureau — and the secret within.

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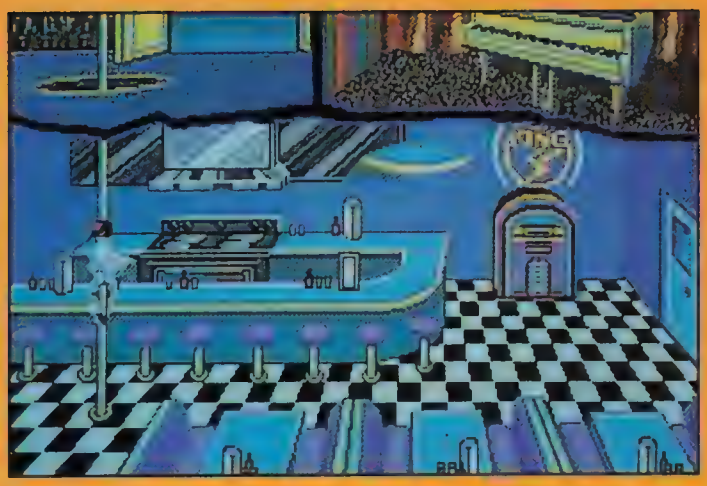
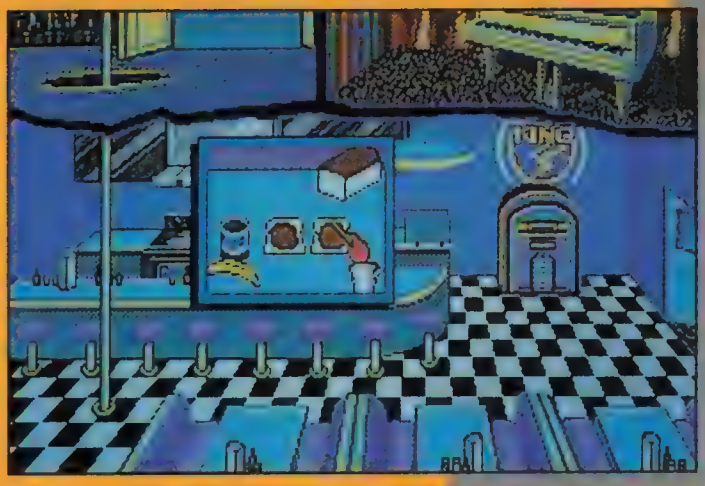
Ladies and Gentleman: Les

By visiting all the scenes and gathering information, you can then settle on a plan of action. You should be aware that the lack of strict linearity can hurt you as well. The game happily lets you go to the next locale, such as from the circus to Las Vegas, even if you haven't done everything you need to do beforehand. Once again, here's one reason why those saves are so important.

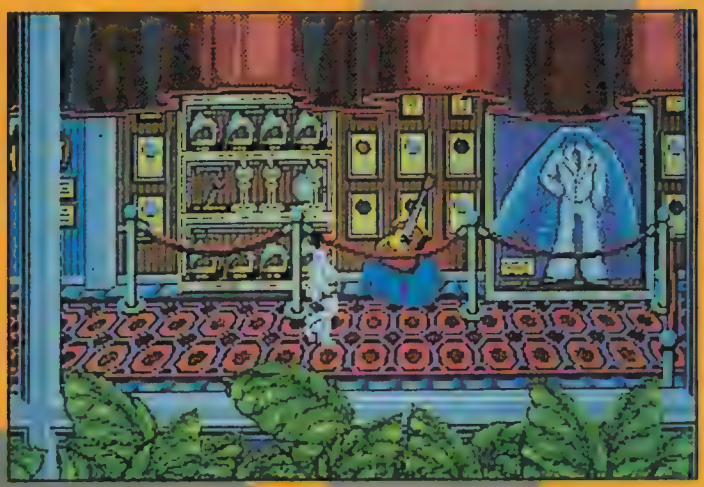
Graphically, *Les Manley in Search for The King* is quite good. In fact, the extended VGA/MCGA graphics are, in selected scenes, excellent. You may find, however, that this extended mode won't run on your computer unless you purge it of all TSR programs.



Since your previous impersonation of The King didn't go over too well with the discriminating crowd at Red's, you might try bulking up a bit with The King's favorite snack. You were listening back at Bobbi's, weren't you?



With the contents of your lunch bag and the item you found on the dining room table, you can concoct your own version of ambrosia, compliments of Skippy and Chiquita.



Now that you can adequately fill out the suit of The King, you need a mike and an axe to make your act perfect. The guitar is going to need some repair, however. Did you, perhaps, forget something back in Mr. Fabulous' suite?

Isn't it amazing what a few extra pounds can do? Les's dynamite performance won him accolades—a fatal trampling by members of Local 417 of The King's Fan Club.

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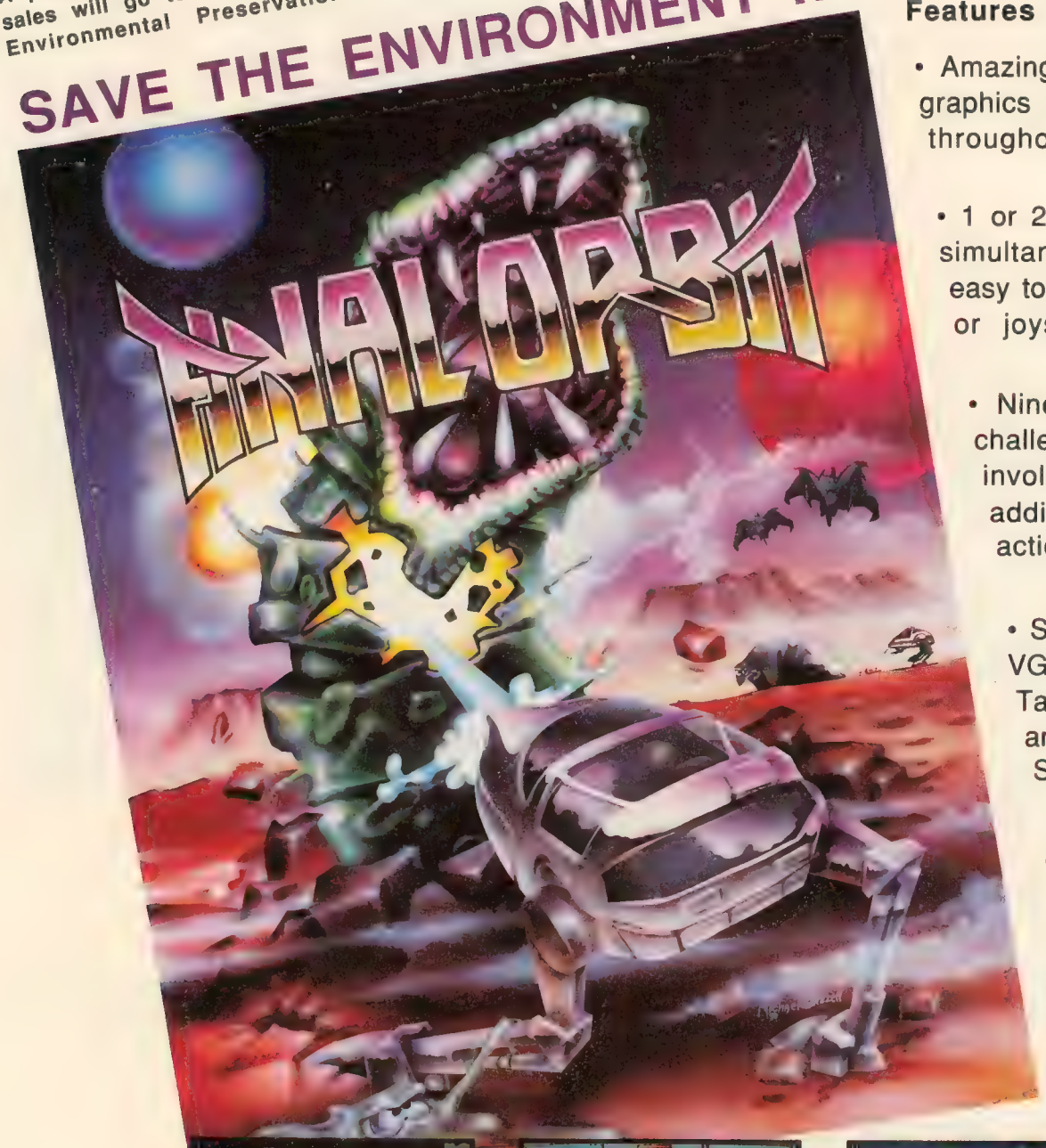
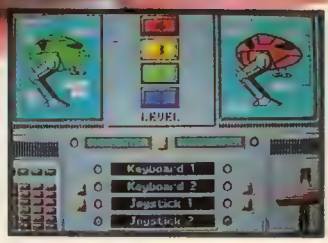


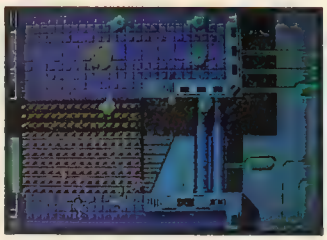
Features Include:

- Amazing arcade style graphics and animations throughout!
- 1 or 2 players simultaneously, with easy to use keyboard or joystick controls
- Nine different challenging levels that involve intense addicting arcade action
- Supports EGA, VGA(256 colors) Tandy Computers and the Ad Lib Sound Board
- Very detailed and animated characters in each challenging level

VGA Screen



VGA Screen



VGA Screen

Smoothest Scrolling and Animation Ever on your PC!

Unique software engine that custom configures itself to the computer's graphic adapter, memory and processor speed that allows the truest arcade style playability on IBM,Tandy,& Compatibles

INNERPRISE Software, Inc.

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Designed and Developed by:
John Reego
Andrew Caldwell

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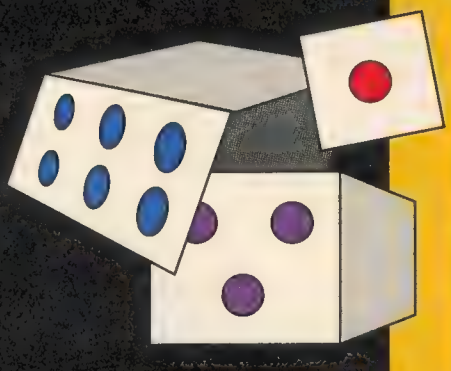
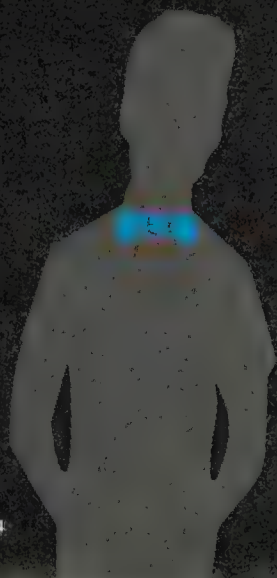


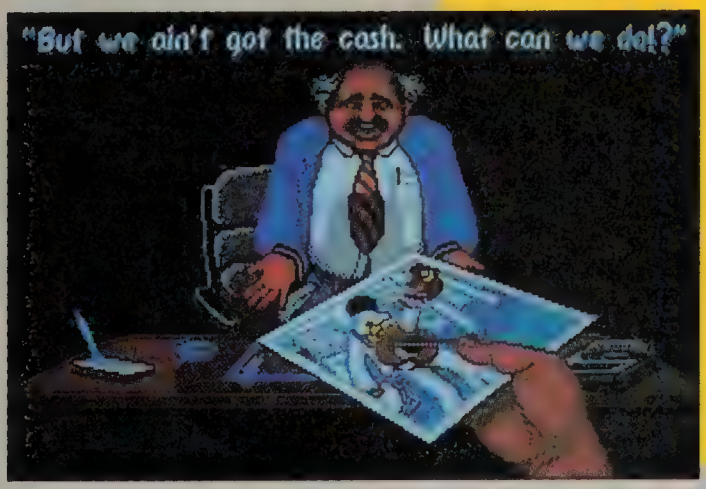
This can cause a problem for mouse users on systems with recent versions of DOS. These versions take up more memory than do earlier editions — so much so that even the addition of a mouse driver may take up too much memory for the game to run in the extended mode. Since there's not that much difference between the normal and extended mode screens, this shouldn't hinder your enjoyment of the game.

Les Manley in: Search for The King is one of those games that will have you beating your head against the wall — and enjoying every minute of it. As an exercise in twisting your mind into new problem-solving positions, it's great. It may be a bit raunchy for some (and perhaps too obfuscatory for others), but that's a part of its charm. For a first effort in this kind of interactive adventure, Accolade should be applauded, as well as encouraged to make good on the promise of *Les Manley's* last scene... an encore venture for the hapless Les.



Les's visit to rock and roll heaven (and an autographed photo of The King leading an angelic combo) may make his death — and resurrection? — more meaningful and rewarding.

If you didn't neglect Zarmooska's lizard, your trip to the hereafter will be a short one. The nurse was weaned on David Bowie, so she's really not too impressed with your photographic evidence.



After all that Les had been through, it would have been nice to say that he got his million bucks, but it seems that WILL-TV had just been talking trash without the cash.

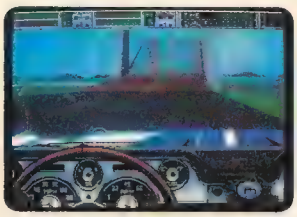
In lieu of money, Les got WILL-TV, such as it is. More importantly, however, he won the undying devotion of the lovely Stella. And if you believe that, I've got some beachfront property in North Dakota we could talk about....

ALL THE FUN OF REAL STUNT RACING WITHOUT THE BRUISES

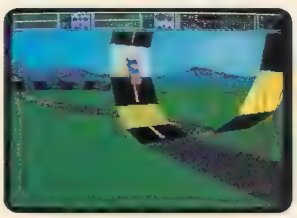
Road etiquette? Forget it!

Get ready for the wildest, most daring stunt driving experience this side of Hollywood. Slip behind the wheel of this classic '66 Shelby Mustang and buckle up for chills and thrills. You'll soon be zipping through the loop-the-loop, twisting through a corkscrew jump, and flying over death-defying ramps.

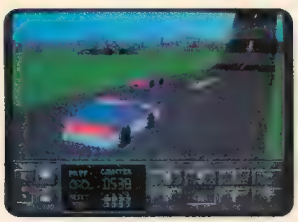
To add to the frenzy, there are other aggressive competitors trying to nudge you off the road, cut you off at a jump, and generally damage your Shelby beyond repair. The excitement escalates as you advance in level of difficulty and take on more challenging courses. With five pre-designed courses and a "construction editor" which allows you to create your own, you'll never tire of the thrill of the chase.



Down shift and hit the gas! You'll need plenty of speed to clear that open drawbridge!



You can almost feel the gut-wrenching G-forces from the loop.



The recorder mode plays back the action from numerous camera sites.

And when you're ready for the big thrill, hook up head-to-head and race against a buddy on another computer.

Multiple view perspectives allow you to see from any angle. Recap all the excitement with the video instant replay. In VCR mode you can rewind, fast forward, pause and view frame by frame. For those sequences you want to review at a later date, save to disk and load them as you desire.

With amazingly realistic 3-D graphics and true-to-life sounds, Stunt Driver delivers all the action of real stunt driving. Everything, that is, but the bruises. So grab your helmet and race to your favorite retailer to be first at the starting line for Stunt Driver!

Available for IBM in CGA, EGA, VGA/MCGA and Tandy.

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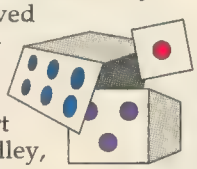
Les Manley's Steve Cartwright: Nothing Like Experience

What goes around, comes around. Just ask Steve Cartwright, author of Accolade's new graphic adventure, *Les Manley In: Search for the King*. Cartwright has a work history that closely resembles the rollercoaster ride of the computer game and videogame industry. A true veteran, he has almost ten years of collective experience designing games.

Remember the Atari 2600 videogame machine? If you do, you might remember games such as *Barnstorming*, *Megamania*, *Seaquest*, *Frostbite*, and *Plaque Attack*. Those games are Cartwright's. OK, so you don't recall those titles. How about the computer games *Hacker*, *Hacker II*, *Aliens*, *Air Ralley*, and *Fast Break*. Those, too, were designed by Cart-wright.

Both candid and humorous, Cartwright is an engaging conversationalist who relates a fascinating — if cyclical — personal history. "Unlike a lot of people, I didn't start programming when I was seven. I didn't build computers in my basement. I happened to go to school with David Crane [author of *A Boy and His Blob*, among other games], and we both later worked at National Semiconductor for a while, designing integrated circuits — not the kind of work where you can come home and say, 'Look, honey, look what I did today.'



"Dave lived in a big apartment complex in Sunnyvale, right in the heart of Silicon Valley, and his tennis partner was Al Miller [Accolade's co-founder and chairman of the board]. Al worked for Atari, and he got Dave a job at Atari. A year later they quit and founded Activision."

Because the industry was so young then, there was no such thing as an *experienced* game designer. So Crane hired his old friend and schoolmate to work with them at Activision. That's how Cartwright got his start as a game programmer.

Cartwright recalls the early days: "I took the programming manual home on a Friday afternoon, and I came back Monday and started programming *Barnstorming*. That took about three months to complete." He then wrote five games over the next three years. Each game was completely written by Cartwright from start to finish — not the way it's done today, where an entire team of designers, artists, animators, programmers, music editors, and so on produces a game.

"I was 23 years old then, and suddenly everybody's treating you like you're a star. You start believing everything they tell you. It got to the point where you said to yourself, 'I'm going over to 7-11 to pick up some milk. I wonder how many people will recognize me.'

"You just assumed that all these people knew who you were and were just too embarrassed to come up to you. We were on 'The Today Show' and in *Time* magazine in stories about videogame designers. It's funny because *we* weren't unusual — we just had unusual jobs, and somehow they thought of us as these alien creatures from outer space."

That's when times were good. Shortly after Cartwright's brief flirtation with celebrity status, the videogame industry did its best imitation of Wall Street's 1929 crash. "It seemed to collapse overnight," Cartwright said. The Commodore 64 began to emerge as the next popular game machine, and companies like Activision shifted gears from videogame software to computer game software.

Cartwright, unfortunately, was on the list of staff to be laid off. Management presumed that videogame designers could not make the transition to computer games. He happened to be working on *Hacker* at that time, and he credits one man on the staff, Brad Fregger (now president of Software Resources International, best known in the game industry for *Ishido*), for saving his job.

Thanks to Fregger, Cartwright was able to finish *Hacker*. It was released just about the time that headline news stories were being written about people breaking into corporate and government computers. *Hacker* became Activision's top-selling title that year.

"When you find you're on the 'cut list,' it does something to your ego," Cartwright recalls, "and I had to overcome the crushing blow that I wasn't

a star any more. Then I did a game titled *Air Ralley*, and it was a total bomb. It was the first failure I ever had, and I spent the next three months sitting in my office trying to figure out why. The answer was almost like a movie scene where you see this hole opening up in the clouds and a ray of light shines through."

He came up with the Cartwright Theory to Successful Games, a theory so simple that it amazed him. He took his theory to Accolade and started over. But ask him to reveal his theory, and he'll say, "What? And let the competition know?"

Cartwright has completed two games for Accolade, *Fast Break* and the newly released *Les Manley In: Search for the King*. The latter has been a 19-month project. "Les Manley was an attempt to create a character that everybody could identify with. I think one of the greatest characters on TV was Barney Fife of the old "Andy Griffith Show," so there's a little bit of Barney in Les.

"We worked with an artist, Justin Chin, who went through dozens of iterations of what this character should look like. One day he had it — the look of a good-natured guy who just never got his big break. He's not a jerk — he's the kind of guy people like. He's competent, but he's never recognized for what he does."

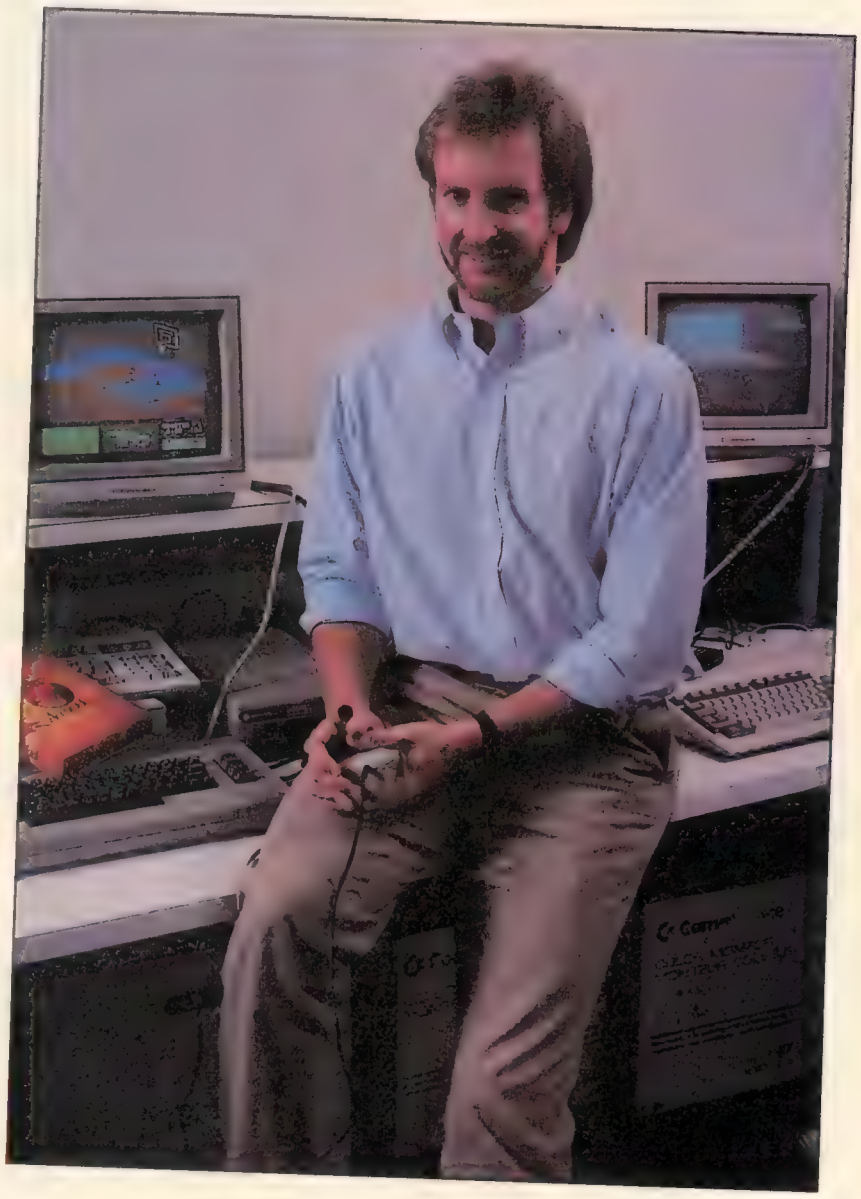
Working on *Les Manly* was an education for Cartwright. He's always done his own programming and created his own game logic, but other concerns like compilers, disk routines, and joystick routines were left to someone else. Not this time. Cartwright had to learn some new programming languages as well as gain familiarity with development on an MS-DOS machine.

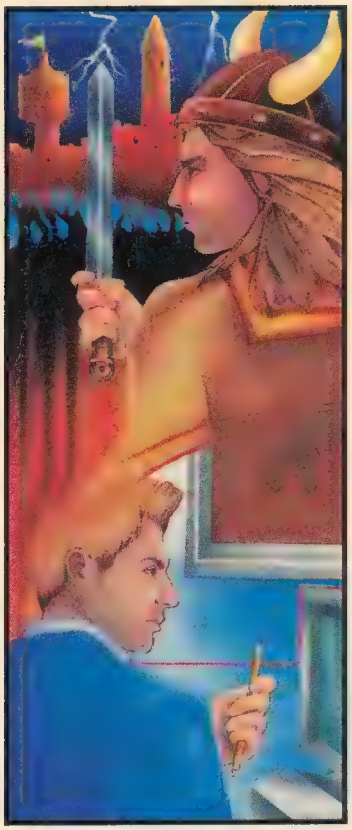
He had to write new graphics, sound, and development tools. And how did he do this? Just like he did back in *Barnstorming* days: "Mostly by buying technical reference books and reading through those." Cartwright is a firm believer that anyone who wants to know how to design games can do just what he did — get some books and learn.

Accolade has recently announced that the company is entering the videogame market and will develop and publish software for Nintendo, Sega Genesis, and NEC TurboGrafx-16. It seems only natural that Cartwright would come full circle and design games for the new generation of videogame machines.

At 33, Steve Cartwright is an elder statesman in the videogame and computer game design industry. Ten years mean a lot. As Cartwright says, "In this industry, opinion doesn't matter — *experience* does."

GP





ALTERNATE LIVES

NEIL RANDALL

CLOSE — BUT NO CIGAR

The beginning screen of the adventure outlines the details of your mission. Keep in mind, though, that there are many other areas to explore.

MegaTraveller 1: The Zhodani Conspiracy is the first of a projected series of science fiction role-playing games from **Paragon Software**. It takes its name, its game system, and its storylines from *MegaTraveller*, the role-playing board game from the Game Designer's Workshop. In turn, *MegaTraveller* itself is a rewrite and update of *Traveller*, GDW's 13-year-old role-playing game.

One of the best ways of staying alive is to buy some armor. The TL12 vac suit is expensive, but it's strong and durable.

The background is important because, although the sales have never been comparable, *Traveller* is to science fiction role playing what *Dungeons and Dragons* is to fantasy role playing. Other sci-fi RPGs have seen the light of day — *Star Trek, Universe, Cyberpunk,* and *Paranoia* among them— but *Traveller* remains the spiritual guide. Designer Marc Miller has devoted a good portion of his life to ensuring the continued evolution of the *Traveller* universe, and his commitment has made his game extremely strong.

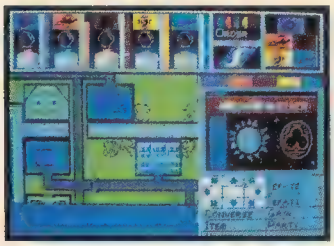
For computer role-playing gamers, then, *MegaTraveller 1* is every bit as important a release as SSI's *Pool of Radiance*, the game that brought *Advanced Dungeons and Dragons* into computer format. And, to be sure, both groups of gamers have a lot to rejoice about. Both SSI and Paragon have offered computer products that remain notably true to their originals. But there are enough problems with *MegaTraveller 1* that it can't receive an unqualified recommendation.

The best thing about *Megatraveller 1* is the character creation process, which is a true delight. In the original *Traveller*, creating a character was a game all to itself. *Megatraveller 1* happily adheres to that earlier system's success. After the attributes of a character are "rolled" by computer dice, you can stick with the rolled characteristics or roll the dice again. Then you decide whether to have your character enlist in a service or be drafted.

You can enlist in the Navy, Army, Marines, Scouts, or Merchants, each of which equips you with different skills and retirement benefits. For each four-year term you remain in the service, you acquire more skills and more benefits. After tailoring your character to your liking, you muster out and receive your benefits. The process is easy, fascinating, and endlessly varied.

Unfortunately, the next part of the game isn't. As soon as you assemble your party, you are thrust into the heart of the adventure. A harried woman tosses you some items and tells you where to take

By calling up the individual character's screens, you can assess weapons, equip the character, and obtain other important information.



With the party showing on the screen as a single large purple icon, the travellers move around the planet of Efate. Roads lead into buildings they can enter.

Aboard the ship, each station can be accessed. Here the computer station has been accessed and the navigation software is being loaded into the computer.

them, and then a battle begins. Now, an opening like this is a good one because it immediately involves you with the action, but *Megatraveller's* battle interface is so unworkable that you can spend hours trying to survive this first encounter.

The battle system is truly the worst part of the game. The reason is quite simple: The designers have tried to squeeze a role-playing game inside a real-time action game, and the two just don't mix. While the enemy is dancing around firing weapons at the party, you are forced to return fire *one character at a time*!

You select the character who should fire by clicking on the selection bar or hitting the appropriate function key, then you press F for fire. A small color-coded square appears on the screen, which you must maneuver with the arrow keys to the target. Then you press Return, and the character shoots.

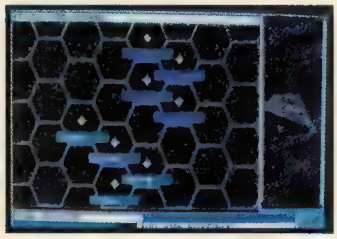
Each time the enemy character leaves that particular square, you must press F and adjust the target square again. And, to be most effective, you must do this for each character in turn. Given the speed with which such shifts are possible, your characters can easily be killed before you successfully negotiate the next shot.

If the *MegaTraveller* series is to continue, and if Paragon's upcoming *Space 1889* (also from a GDW board game) is to employ a similar game system, this combat method must be completely revamped. If you can control only one character at a time, that's fine; but the other party members must then act on their own (as in Origin's *Ultima VI*), not just stand around and get hit.

Or the designers could forget the real-time battles and have each character select their actions individually, setting the action in motion only after the selection takes place. This is the battle system most role-playing games use (SSI's AD&D series in particular).

Other interface decisions are questionable, but none begin to approach the problems of the combat system. At several points in the game you can select Quit as a game option. But in some cases (such as while you're in space), selecting Quit actually throws you back into DOS without any warning.

Less dramatic is the loading of programs into the ship's computer. It's a great idea to make you purchase the programs that make your ship work properly, and you must load them into the computer one at a time. But the programs take a painfully long time to load, even with a fast computer. Simply steering your ship is another minor headache, and one that is completely unnecessary. *Starflight 2* has a much stronger navigation system.



The Jump screen shows a hexagonal grid of nearby systems. Note the message at the bottom of the screen that Jump and Nav programs must be running before a jump can succeed.

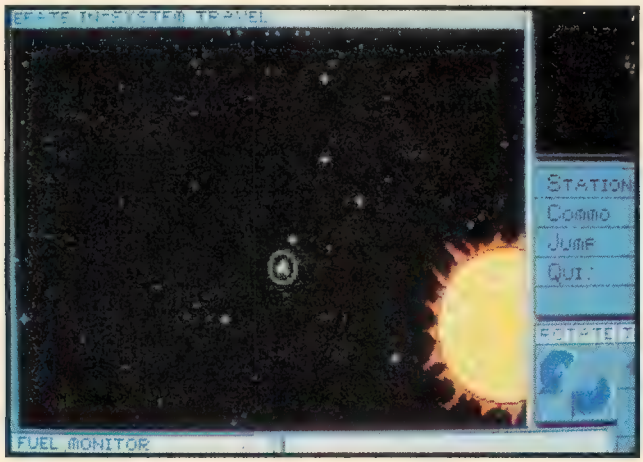
The most important difficulty, however, is that playing *MegaTraveller* requires more tinkering than exploring. Creating characters takes time (albeit enjoyably), as do little tasks like properly equipping the characters, purchasing supplies, renting vehicles, and so on.

Conversing with characters, by contrast, is almost rudimentary, and exploration is hampered significantly by the need to break the party and engage in the game's strange combat system. *MegaTraveller 1* plays in a far shorter time than *Starflight 2* or *Ultima VI*, as the side trips in the game are often quite unnecessary.

The character-creation sequence is an extremely enjoyable part of this game. This brand new character has enlisted for her first term in the Navy.

Is there hope? Yes, a lot of it. Paragon has set out to offer a computer version of a rich, exciting role-playing game, and despite the game's flaws, the efforts are hugely appreciated. *Megatraveller 1* is quite clearly a labor of love; unfortunately, love doesn't always conquer all. For the next installment, the system needs a brand new battle system, a smoother interface, and a longer, more involved plot. If these enhancements come about, then the *MegaTraveller* series should light up the stars.

GP



The in-system travel screen shows a map surrounding the location of the ship. The map shows that the ship is headed straight toward this system's sun, where it can be destroyed by heat.

THE DESKTOP GENERAL

WILLIAM R. TROTTER

RAD SPADS, FROGFOOTS, AND SECRET WEAPONS

Knights of the Sky *was one of several good-looking World War I flying games.*

The summer edition of the mammoth Consumer Electronics Show (Chicago, June 2-5) is traditionally the time when software manufacturers reveal their hottest new products — the games that they fervently hope will sell enough copies between release date and Dec. 31 to put them in the black for the entire year.

Flight of the Intruder *should be on store shelves about the time that the movie of the same name hits the cinemas.*

Trends glimpsed dimly at the January CES were confirmed at this one. VGA graphics are rapidly becoming the standard. Easier, more intuitive interfaces are now a design priority for most companies. And both games and simulations are becoming much more cinematic in their visual style, with a dramatic increase in camera-angle viewpoints, lighting effects, and film-editing narrative techniques evident in many of the better games.

In the category of war games, last year's tank simulations have given way to a whole flock of World War I flying games. Can it be that after a glut of complicated, high-tech flight simulators — many of them simply more trouble than they were worth — game players are hungry for the clean, back-to-basics excitement of dogfighting with a stick, a rudder, and a gunsight?

Whatever the reasons, a number of exciting and colorful WWI simulations were displayed in Chicago. Pride of place *has* to go to **Cinemaware's** eagerly awaited *Wings*, which carries war-movie graphics about as far as current technology allows, but all the other games looked first rate, too.

Dynamix, for instance, is offering *Red Baron*, in which the action is modeled after the flying characteristics of actual World War I aces. This game lets you begin a campaign in 1914 and go on to the end (if you survive), flying new kinds of aircraft as they become available. Nice graphics and a truly stirring soundtrack make this October release look most appealing.

Three-Sixty Software showed an intriguing demo of a WWI game tentatively entitled *Ace of Aces II*. Eight types of aircraft are modeled in this game, including some that have rarely — if ever — been simulated before. And **MicroProse**, a company that knows a thing or two about aircraft simulations, previewed of *Knights of the Sky*, in which the player may elect to be a French, British or American pilot and duel not only with von Richthoven, but Max Immelman and Oswald Boelche as well. Both of these attractive games are scheduled for fourth-quarter releases.

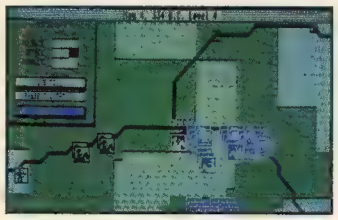
More up-to-date aircraft were not neglected, especially in the new category of "bestseller-tie-ins." In a surreal juxtaposition that would have been unthinkable just a few years ago, author Stephen Coonts, whose list of bellicose bestsellers began with *Flight of*

Lucasfilms' Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe *lets you take control of a giant Nazi flying wing.*

the Intruder, shared a **Spectrum HoloByte** press conference with Alexey Pajitnov, the Soviet genius behind *Tetris* and the marvelous new *Faces* game.

There was an irony to this occasion (the United States presenting a jingoistic war game and the Soviet Union offering a whimsical brainteaser) that was not lost on the press. But be that as it may, *Flight of the Intruder* (both the PC game and the summer movie were previewed) looked like an exciting specimen of a curious genre that might be called Vietnam Revisionism and should appeal to all those with an interest in the period.

Considerably more interesting was *Gorbachev's Ace*, **Electronic Arts'** forthcoming simulation of the SU-25 "Frogfoot" attack bomber. Using an improved version of the *LHX Attack Chopper* engine, this game lets you carve a career in an elite Soviet Air Force unit, bombing and strafing various anti-*glasnost* reactionaries. EA shrewdly sidestepped a whopping ethical dilemma by not including any Lithuania or Afghanistan scenarios.



Global havoc is wreaked in Command HQ *— and a good time is had by all.*

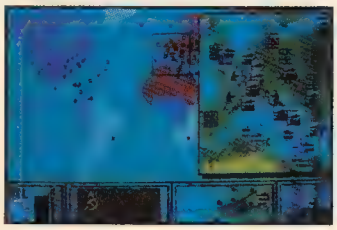
Even more interesting was **Lucasfilm's** exotic might-have-been campaign game titled *Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe*, slated for a September release. This terrific-looking game allows you to fly the ME-262 jet fighter, the rocket-powered ME-163 Komet, or the bizarre Horten-229 flying wing, an aircraft so far ahead of its time that some of its design features were incorporated into the B-2 Stealth Bomber. You can also fly U.S. B-17s and P-51s that duelled with these astounding weapons. This is a great idea, and the screen clips I saw looked much smoother and more detailed than those from *Their Finest Hour*. I can't wait to get my hands on this one!

Megafortress, from Three-Sixty, promises to be a very different sort of flight simulator, too, although only a brief demo loop (a great title-and-credits sequence that would do credit to any Hollywood production) was ready at CES time. Based on the bestselling novel *Flight of the Old Dog*, *Megafortress* puts you in command of a B-52 packed with tons of futuristic weaponry and lets you try to pilot it on a long, dangerous, top-secret mission.

Two of the three naval simulations on view were submarine games. MicroProse has lavished gorgeous graphics on *Silent Service II*, a game that is virtually self-recommending to the legion of fans that enjoyed the original. The screens Three-Sixty showed from an as-yet-untitled U-boat game of epic proportions had a brooding, atmospheric quality that augurs well for the finished product.

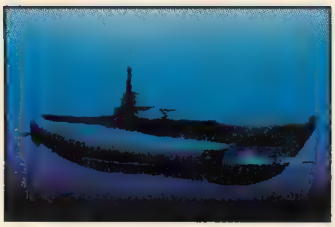
Since Three-Sixty mortgaged its reputation, its soul, and its employees' very sanity on the successful completion of *Harpoon*, it was gratifying to learn that both sales figures and critical reception have rewarded the company for its ordeal. *Harpoon* fans will rejoice to learn that a full-featured scenario editor is now available.

Jon Correll, head of product development for Three-Sixty, cited overwhelming consumer demand as the inspiration for this new program. With it, *Harpoon* addicts can wage dreamed-up campaigns galore, including a big Mediterranean scenario that incorporates the Israeli, Egyptian, Greek, and Syrian navies, as well as the Soviet Black Sea Fleet. A Falk land Islands battleset is also in the works and should be far enough along by the January CES for a preview.



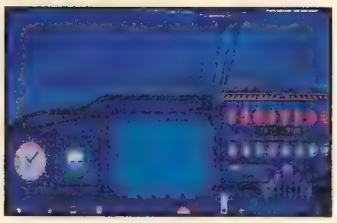
Fans of the original Universal Military Simulator *will rejoice in the added features and global scale of the sequel,* UMS II.

In general, land warfare got short shrift at this CES, though a few games did catch my eye. *Operation Combat*, from **Merit Software** (a fourth quarter release in its PC format) had neat animated tanks and nicely modeled landscapes. *Command HQ*, from MicroProse, seemed an appealing and fast-paced homage to the theme of Armageddon unleashed.



A classic simulation gets updated with great VGA graphics in Silent Service II.

And *Midwinter* (also from MicroProse), although technically a science fiction game, looked like a corker of a strategy game — it puts you in command of a near-future settlement in the middle of 160,000 square miles of Arctic wilderness and challenges you to organize resistance to a ruthless invader by utilizing your snow-buggies, skiers, hang-gliders, and so on in military roles for which they were never intended. This novel and graphically attractive game should already be on store shelves.



Megafortress, *from Three-Sixty, is the first B-52 simulator to reach the market.*

Last but far from least, fans of the *Universal Military Simulator* can finally relax: *UMS II: Nations at War* is scheduled for a late summer release. This *huge* program gives you every feature of the original *UMS*, as well as improved graphics and global scope: 127 nations, 525 provinces, 32,000 military units, and a "planet editor" that allows you to design entire worlds, then systematically devastate them according to whatever apocalyptic fantasies you can imagine.

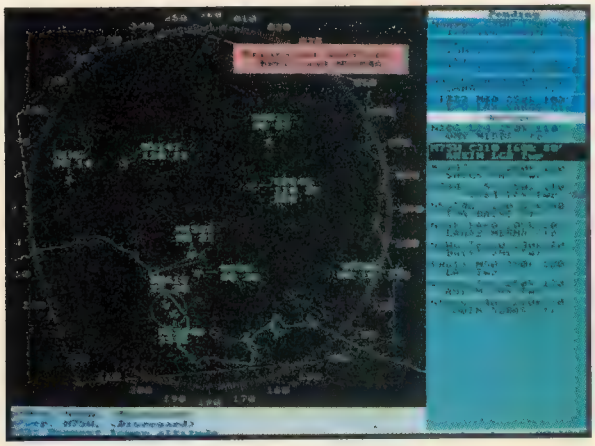
All in all, this edition of the CES showcased an embarrassment of riches for the wargaming enthusiast. And of course, as the above games come out and get played, you'll see detailed reviews in these pages.

GP

VIRTUAL REALITY

ARLAN LEVITAN

ALL WORK AND NO PLAY?



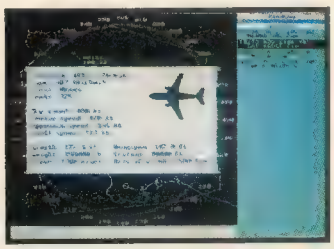
It's another close call in sky over the Los Angeles TRACON sector. If L.A.'s hectic pace isn't your style, you can select Boston, Miami, Chicago, San Francisco, or Seattle. Add-on sector packs that cover other areas of the U.S. are available separately.

A few months ago in this column, Selby Bateman mentioned his experiences with a Commodore 64 version of an air traffic control simulation. Selby wondered (quite aptly) why anyone would want to spend time with a simulation that demands such intense concentration and produces almost as much stress as the real thing. As in real life, the endurance of stress within a game should be balanced by an intellectual or emotionally satisfying reward.

Truly successful simulations allow the player to experience both the mechanical and emotional aspects of an activity that would normally be unavailable or difficult to experience within the structure of the player's real-life world. A simulation that fails to recreate the actual emotive component of the process being modeled is fundamentally incomplete.

Flight simulators, despite their widespread popularity, consistently fail to capture any of the exhilarative joy of free flight. They are interesting learning and diversionary experiences, but I haven't seen one yet that can infuse the awe and peacefulness of pushing a glider up a thermal over the Arizona desert.

It's not so much a matter of taste, but a question of ego. Why would anyone would want to be an air traffic controller (ATC) in the first place? ATC work pays fairly well, but the burnout rate and high stress involved are hardly attractive. The bottom line is that less than one quarter of one percent of the general populace is capable of the abstract logic and control required to make it as an ATC.



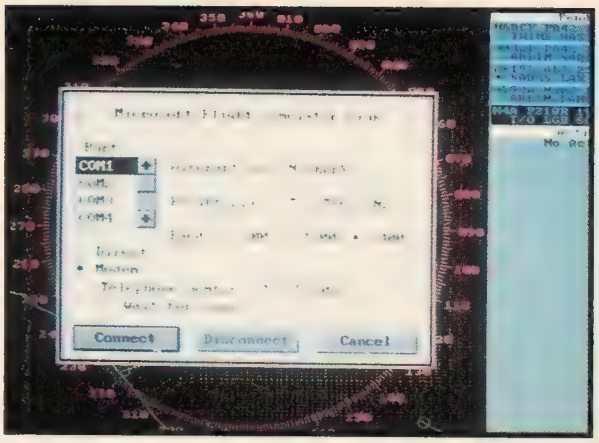
Don't ask your airborne charges to write any checks their performance envelopes can't cash. If your memory needs a kick, the specs of any plane on the scope can be immediately brought to bear.

Within their zones of control, air traffic controllers are accorded senior deity status. Your minions may exercise free will in their choice of destinations, but you maintain absolute authority and control over how (and if) they get there. Maybe one doesn't have to aspire to godhead to enjoy actual or simulated air traffic control, but according to senior instructors at the FAA's ATC school, it certainly helps.

Wesson International's *TRACON II* succeeds on multiple levels as an ATC simulation. It successfully presents the fundamentals and personal intensity of air traffic control. Even if you never gain proficiency at handling heavy air traffic, the insight it provides into how the world's airways are managed is fascinating in its own right.

There are three types of air traffic controllers. "Tower" controllers handle takeoffs and

landings at airports. "Center" controllers typically handle aircraft that only fly through a given sector. "TRACON" (Terminal Radar Approach CONtrol) controllers have to direct aircraft to be "handed off" to tower controllers, clear departing aircraft for takeoff, and handle overflights between center controller sectors as well. Being a TRACON ATC offers the widest variety of tasks, but is also the most complex and demanding type of ATC work.



TRACON II's *multi-player feature allows other PCs running* Microsoft Flight Simulator *(3.0 or higher) to join in the fracas and be directed through your airspace with the rest of the traffic. One flyer per serial port on your PC is supported via modem or direct connection.*

As a TRACON controller, you are responsible for all of the air traffic in your sector from ground level up to 12,000 feet. Keeping aircraft separated to prevent midair collisions is the order of the day, and the fundamental rules are deceptively simple. Aircraft at the same altitude must be separated by at least three miles. Aircraft that are not separated by three miles must be separated by at least 1,000 feet in altitude.

It may sound simple enough, but keep in mind that airplanes leaving and arriving at an airport often need to gain or reduce altitude. And every aircraft you handle has a flight plan that dictates their ultimate destination.

TRACON II's display is divided into four primary areas. A realistic radarscope of your sector of control occupies most of the screen (and your attention). A variety of options allows you to customize the appearance and amount of information displayed on the scope to suit your level of ATC expertise.

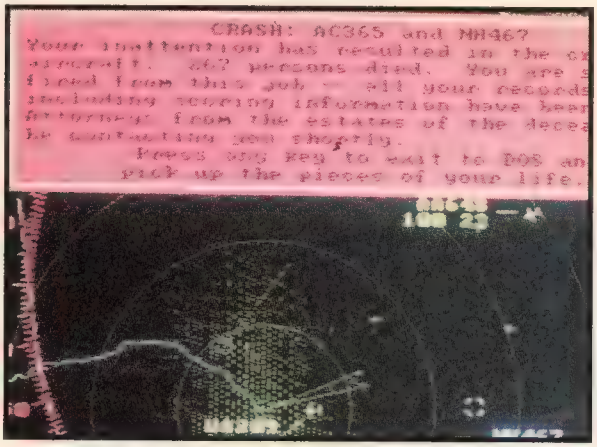
"Tags" associated with each radar contact identify each aircraft's call sign, altitude, and speed. Commands may be issued to planes using keyboard entry or a mouse. The commands and pilot acknowledgments appear under the radar scope. The commands given and executed may also be echoed by a digitized voice through your computer's internal speaker. The sound is a bit scratchy but is easy enough to understand after you get used to it.

To the right of the radarscope are "flight strips" for pending and active aircraft. Planes waiting to take off or enter your sector show up first in the pending area. When you accept control over them they become actives. The flight strips provide, in abbreviated format, the flight plan for each plane.

Since *TRACON II* executes in real-time, there are occasional lulls between periods of peak activity. A "skip" key, which jumps things ahead seven seconds, can be used to move quickly ahead. With a few hours of practice, I was able to handle 15 to 20 planes in as many minutes under perfect conditions, and rack up scores close enough to the theoretical maximum to push my hat size up a few notches.

In a perfect world, air traffic is fairly light, the weather is great, pilots under your aegis never make mistakes, emergencies never occur, and your equipment is 100 percent reliable. Once you've got the basics down, *TRACON II* lets you vary those scenario parameters to approximate real life more closely, or even to create your own personal vision of ATC Hell. A few minutes of handling multiple maydays while incompetent pilots blundered through heavy thunderstorms was enough to bring my pride (and a Lear Jet and 747) embarrassingly back down to earth.

Wesson International markets several accessories for dedicated *TRACON II* fans. For $60 you can markedly improve the fidelity of spoken ground/air communication with an add-on external speaker that uses special hardware and voice drivers. And true fanatics won't even flinch at the thought of plunking down $350 for a speech recognition system that frees you from mouse and/or keyboard input altogether.



TRACON II may be stressful, but the emotional payoff it offers is uniquely satisfying and quite different from any other computer simulation I've experienced. I may not be able to cope with emulsifying a horde of fast-moving slimy aliens any more, but I can handle bringing in a DC-8 with hydraulic failure through rough weather and a crowded sky with the best of them.

GP

Fall alseep at the wheel during heavy weather and you're likely to be the cause of an international air disaster. You can bet that this wasn't the type of merger Air Canada and Nippon Air had in mind.

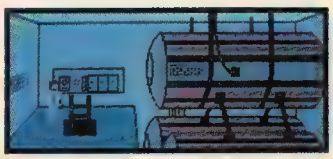
Why is that waking from suspended animation makes you feel like something normally found growing in dark, damp cellars?

Earthrise

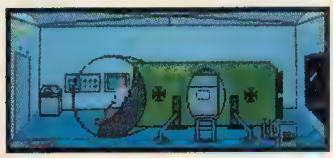
GARY MEREDITH

There are certain perks to being the Terran Mining Guild's number-one troubleshooter, but there are disadvantages, too — like being on call 24 hours a day, every day. Or worse, being the guy who gets all the tough assignments. But if you weren't a hero-type, you wouldn't be the star of this **Interstel** game.

The guild chairman has handed over yet another impossible mission. The rich mining asteroid, Solus, has gone silent. All attempts to contact the crew on the giant rock have failed, and collision with Earth is imminent. Your job, quite naturally, is to divert Solus.



Remember: If it's not broke, don't fix it! The engines are running smoothly without your help. So leave them alone and head toward the shuttle bay.

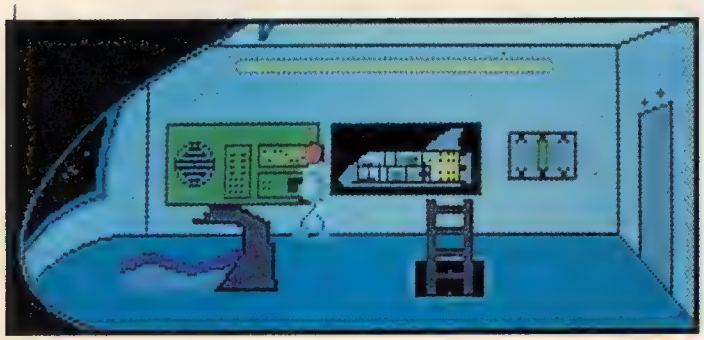


The shuttle is all fueled up and ready to go, but you can't open the bay doors from here. Try looking in the control cabin — and don't forget to depressurize the shuttle compartment.

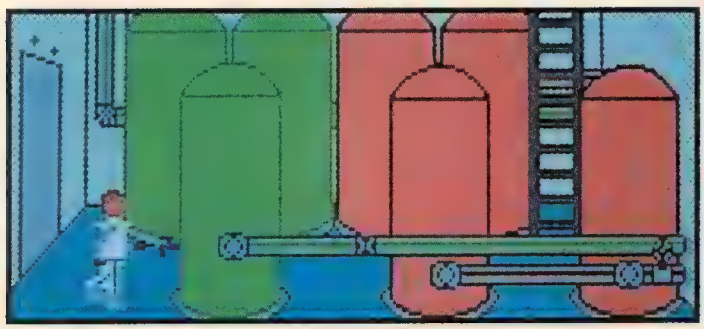
Solus must not only be diverted, but also must be saved intact. Earth's mineral scarcity has reached critical stages, and the Terran Mining Guild has been rocketing asteroids into an Earth orbit for mining. The loss of Solus's minerals would be devastating.

The loss of the crews' lives would be tragic as well. But certain members of the guild believe that the long trip from the asteroid belt back to Earth has driven the members of the crew insane. The silence from Solus might hide a crew gone mad, but you have a sneaking suspicion that the stillness conceals something much worse.

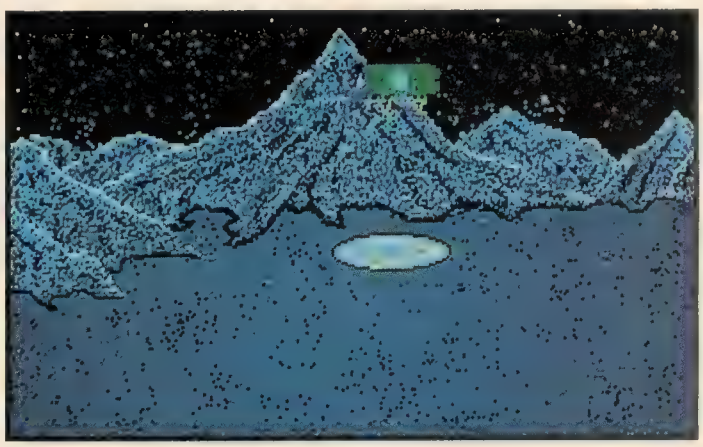
After a quick trip spent in cryogenic sleep, you land on Solus. If you've searched your mother ship completely, you should have the items you need to get started — such as an adequate supply of oxygen, although it takes a little foraging to obtain it. The only tank you can find is empty, so you must check the rear compartments for an oxygen store. Then you're ready to go down to the asteroid's surface. Well ... at least



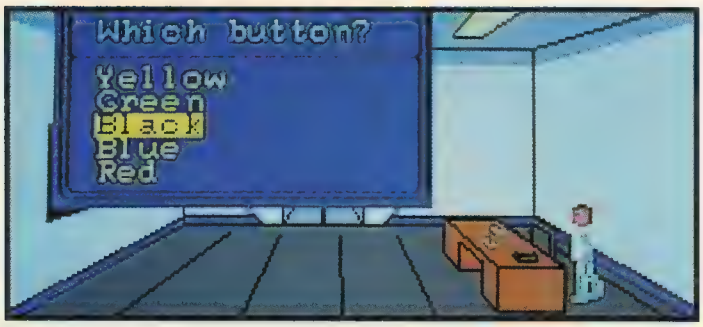
It's hard to get good ground crews these days. This time all they left you was one small — and empty — oxygen tank.



Fortunately, you remember those engineering courses from your academy days and manage to adapt the ship's main oxygen tank to your needs.



Your trip down to the surface of Solus is on automatic guidance, but once you touch down, you're all on your own.



Knowing which button to push gets you past the security checkpoint, but only if you remembered to pick up a badge earlier.

you'll be ready once you figure out how to operate the bay doors in the shuttle.

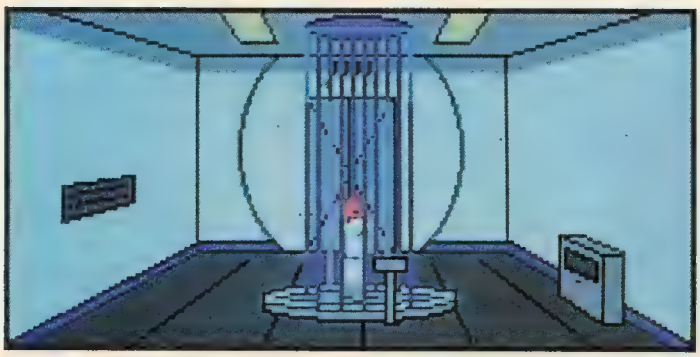
FORBIDDEN PLANET

It's only later — after you've made a careful exploration — that you realize that strange creatures have damaged critical control and propulsion systems on Solus. But there's still no sign of the station crew. Your immediate concern should be to repair Solus's engines and controls to alter its trajectory. Search the asteroid (inside and outside the complex) to find the items and clues you need to make the repairs.

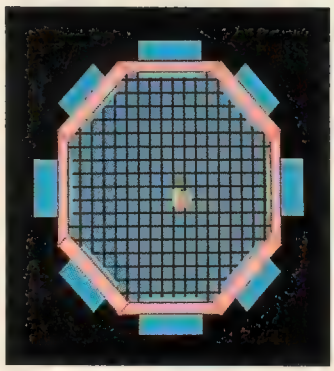
But before the first screw can be turned, you must get past the base's security system and decontaminate yourself. A word of warning — unless you like having your skin fried, it's best to use only the personnel decontamination setting. Also, don't forget to pick up a security badge, or you won't even be able to get into the main complex.

The control complex is laid out in two levels, with passageways and rooms radiating from a central octagonal hub. While most of the rooms and corridors still seem to possess a breathable atmosphere, it would be a mistake to assume that all of them do. Fortunately, you have an adequate oxygen supply, and you can add to it once you've found the complex's storage tanks.

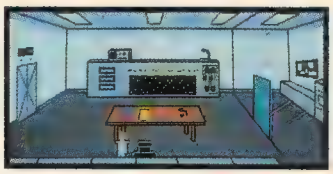
Before venturing into any corridor, remember to check the atmosphere reading. If there is air in an area, it pays to remove your helmet to conserve your oxygen. You always suffocate if you're wearing the helmet when you run out of air



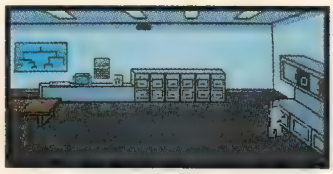
The decontamination beams do wonders for that hungover feeling lingering from your cryogenic sleep. Don't even think about experimenting with the other setting.



There's a main hub on each level with corridors radiating outward. It's always wise to enter any corridor wearing your helmet — at least until you can test the air.



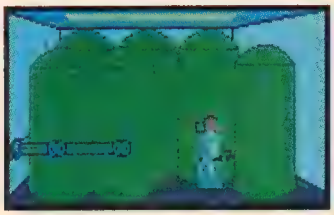
The nerve center of the complex is the main security room. All the force field controls are located here, as is the main computer.



There could be some very valuable information in one of those file cabinets, and don't overlook the indispensable Erik the Bee in his jar.

You really don't have time for a workout — unless you feel the need to pump up a bit in order to use the hammer that you've found here.

Once the crew members had completed the complex and set Solus in motion, they were supposed to go into cryogenic sleep. It appears that they never made it that far.



Once you're down on Solus, the only source of oxygen for your tank is in this room, located just off the main cryo-sleep chamber.

— even if you're standing in an oxygen-rich room.

You should know that not only does your suit provide you with little or no protection against the creatures you meet, but it also fails to cushion you in the event of long falls. And while gravity on Solus is minimal, inertia can still rear its ugly head if you're not careful.

HAVE WE MET SOMEWHERE BEFORE?

If *Earthrise* seems strangely familiar to many players, it's no illusion. The game interface, text entry, and humor are quite similar to many of the popular games from Sierra On-Line. You may even find yourself expecting Roger Wilco, the hero of the *Space Quest* series, to pop up.

Another quality *Earthrise* shares with Sierra games is the need to save the game whenever you enter an unknown area or expect to encounter any of the alien nasties that run rampant throughout the complex. Because you can save to directories other than the *Earthrise* directory, you can save games until you've run out of floppy disks or hard drive memory.

Beyond saving regularly, you must also train yourself to examine everything in each room or corridor. Some essential items may not be visible at a glance, so you should try to go over every square inch of an area before moving on.

The game designers seem to have had a good time throwing in red herrings o'plenty, but you can't afford to overlook anything. There are some rooms that appear to be rich in clues or items, and you may end up beating your head against the wall before discovering that you've been had. The locker area at the end of the M1-M2 corridor is a case in point.

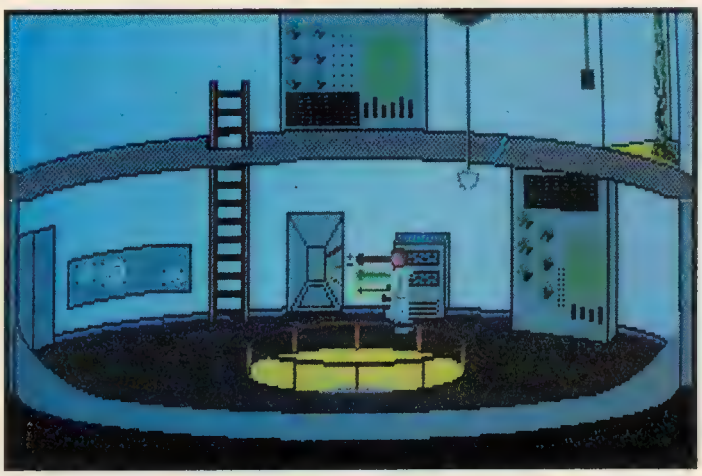
Expect to stretch your imagination trying to solve *Earthrise's* many puzzles. Although not as off-the-wall as some of the problems in *Space Quest III*, overcoming many of the obstacles you face can take some mental circumnavigation.

For example, Erik the Bee, whom you discover in a jar in the science lab, is essential to defeating one of the monsters. But here's the rub: The monster resides in an area beyond one of the depressurized corridors, and taking Erik into that corridor results in a rather messy decompression for your little friend.

Eventually, you discover metal containers in the mess hall into which you can place Erik to carry him safely through the airless corridor. Of course, even when you've arrived at the solution, you need to make sure you get Erik through the corridor before he runs out of air in the small container.

You may find that you have trouble dealing with the text parser, which can be a bit obtuse at times. As with any

This guy's a little tougher to elude. You'll discover that there's simply no future in trying to get past the spider — but you may be able to take the wind out of his sails.



The main reactor appears to be running smoothly, but no power is reaching the engines or the guidance computer. Grab the wrench while you're here, but stay away from the slime.

game of this type, phrasing is important. Words that can be both nouns or verbs (such as 'ring') can sometimes confuse the software. If you stick to the simplest commands, you probably won't have too much trouble, but there will still be times when perfectly logical sentences elicit *non sequiturs* from your computer.

BACK TO BUSINESS

Once you've explored and collected random items, you can return to your prime directive — to repair the engines and guidance systems that were gnawed in two by the Solus equivalent of buck-toothed rodents. You must weld the severed power conduit back together with the blowtorch hidden in a crew member's room. Then you must replace the wires to the guidance computer with wire strong enough to handle the electrical current.

While you can find wires inside the tower control box on the asteroid's surface, those wires are too small to carry the current to the computers, and by taking them you also disable the power for the antenna. And if the power is disabled, you won't be able to enter the antenna control house to find an item that you need before you can get the correct wire for the guidance system. Everything is interconnected, and the life of a galactic mechanic can become quite complicated.

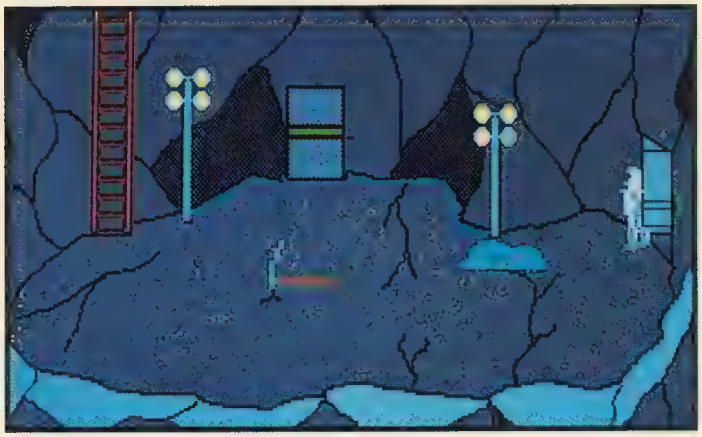
For example, in another area a chasm has opened up along one of the corridors. You can't jump across it, but if you can remove the extension ladder from the emergency exit, you'll be able to bridge the gap. It happens, however, that the ladder is chained to the exit so you must find something to cut the chain. Egad! The way you acquire the items — and the *order* in which you acquire them — is critical to your solving the Solus problem.

The necessity for a map can't be stressed strongly enough. After awhile the corridors and rooms begin to look alike, and since you must do certain things in a certain order, a map of where you've been and what you found in each room or corridor will save you a lot of time and hair-pulling later on.

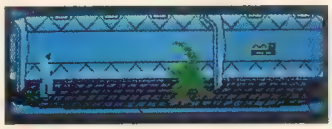
Of course, it also helps to know where all those monsters are lurking and just where you need your helmet. It can be all too easy to make a big discovery, then, in your haste, forget the lack of air in the corridor between the two places. Having a map of all those corridors can certainly save you the shock of seeing yourself turned inside out. As a bonus, studying your map when you're stumped for a solution to a certain problem can often give you ideas.

You should also make notes of any papers you find. Information you find in the science lab can be entered on the computer in the security department, which leads to clues on how to defeat the creatures. You must access the biomed database and then enter any names you come across.

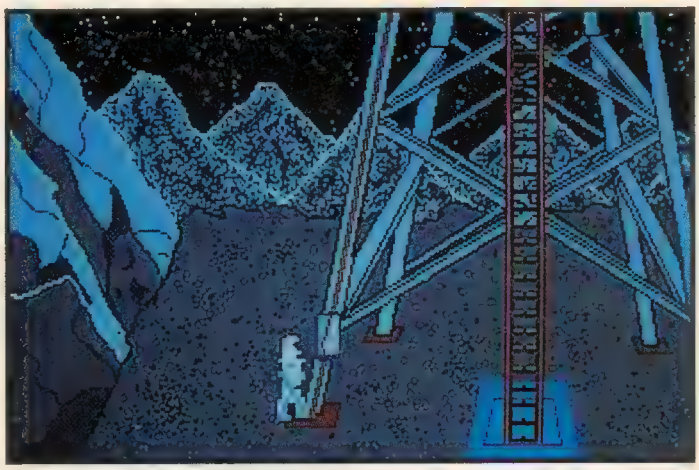
Graphically, *Earthrise* is perhaps not quite as sophisticated as the most recent adventure games, but the graph-



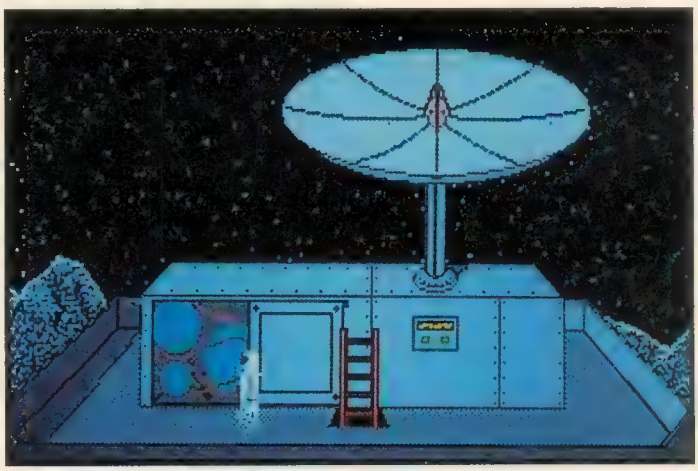
While it may appear slow and vulnerable to a dose of salt, this slime creature can only be successfully attacked from above with the help of a laser drill.



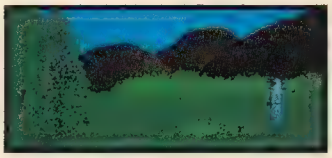
That mouth appears to be just about the right size to swallow a man in a space suit.



Your temptation may be to cannibalize this control box for the wires inside. However, they're too puny for the guidance computer. And besides, you need the antenna to keep turning a while longer.



The screwdriver you need is wedged between the gears and the pulleys, but you don't want to reach in there while the motor is running — or do you?



Shades of the next generation Enterprise — *a holodeck on Solus. Could the crew be in here somewhere, frolicking through the optical meadows?*

ics are still good. You shouldn't have any trouble distinguishing what an item is, but in case you do the game describes it for you.

With its ease of play, clever puzzles, and slightly twisted humor, *Earthrise* will keep you at the keyboard for many enjoyable hours.

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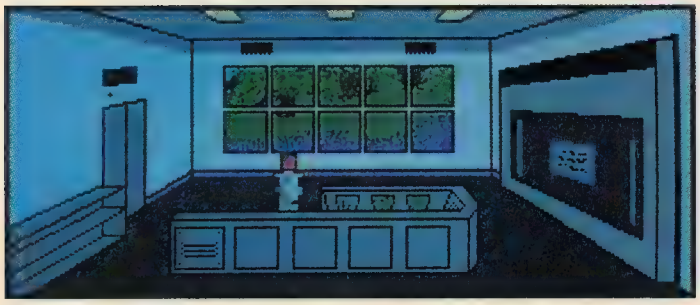
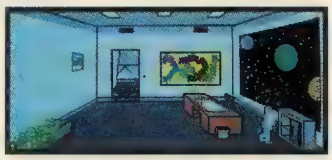
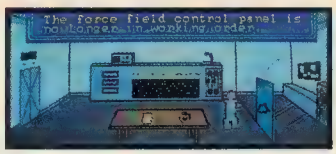


Once you manage to discover the door to the holodeck control room, you realize that the items you need to repair the guidance computer might be here.

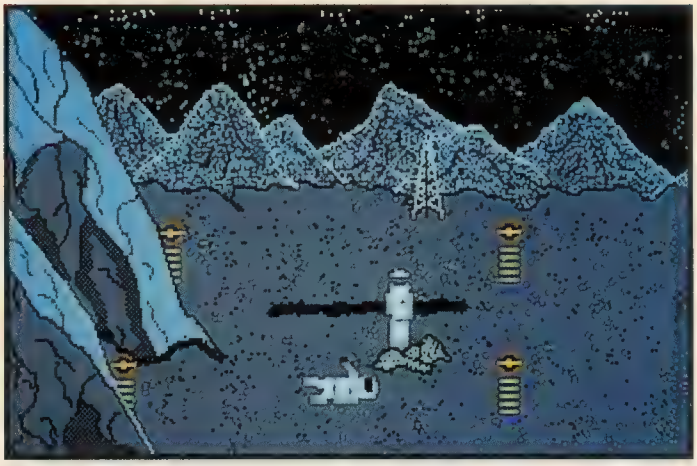


For the most part, the crews' quarters are either inaccessible or just not very interesting. This one, however, provides clues and a valuable item.

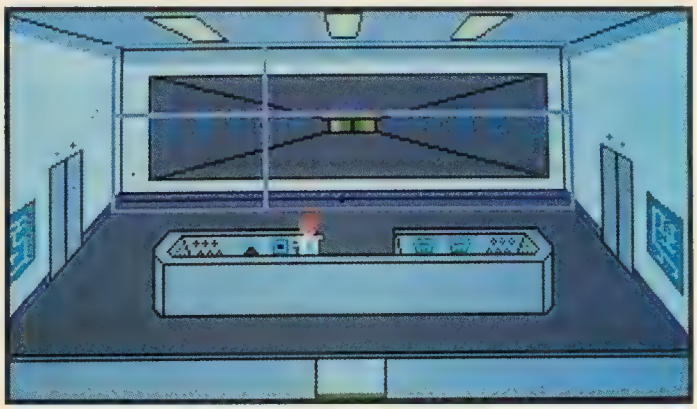


Lasers are wonderful tools, but there are some things they won't affect. While firing through the glass might be the obvious answer, you may want to reflect a bit more on the problem.

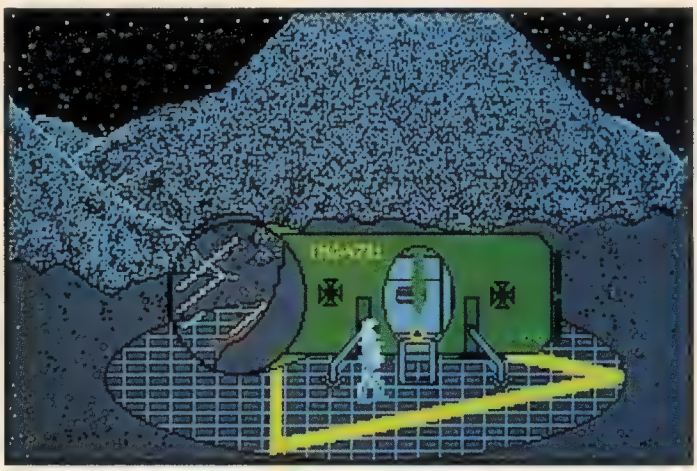
Hardware Requirements: IBM, Tandy, and compatables; 640K minimum memory; DOS 2.0 or higher; EGA Tandy 16-Color, CGA graphics.



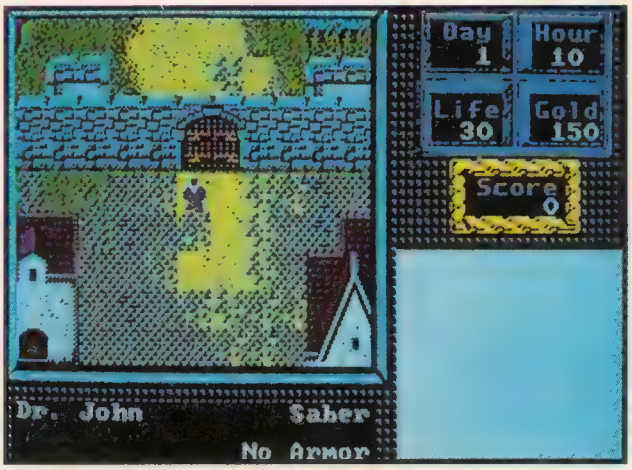
With the force field disabled, you can finally get to this crew member. In case you're not aware of it, financial security may be close at hand.



The power conduit has been repaired, the guidance computer is on line, and Solus is back on course. Just another ho-hum day in the life of a universal troubleshooter.



Of course, just when you thought you were home free, you run into this lime gelatin creature in your shuttle. If you remembered to keep that cake, now's the time to share with a friend.



Dr. John, the battling scholar, begins his quest just inside the gates to the city of Maramon. Look in the manual for a hint about where to start.

The Keys to Maramon

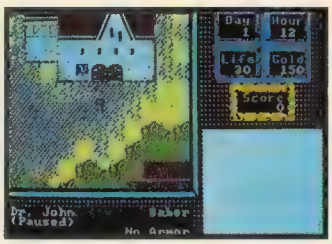
NEIL RANDALL

In the wake of last year's highly successful *The Magic Candle* comes this new fantasy role-playing game from **Mindcraft**. While *The Keys to Maramon* is clearly an attempt to capitalize on the compelling nature of the earlier game, in many ways it falls significantly short. *Maramon* is fun in its own way, but its frustrating game-play in the early stages, combined with a questionable interface, keep it from being the strong successor to *The Magic Candle* players were hoping for.

The biggest problem with *Maramon* is simply getting started. You begin the adventure by choosing one of four characters to control throughout the story. The huntsman, for example, comes equipped with a longbow, an axe, and healing potions. The blacksmith, by comparison, has almost no equipment, but boasts extraordinary physical strength. The courier (the only female) has money but no weaponry, while the scholar (the most interesting of the lot) has good equipment and decent smarts. Once you choose your character, you are thrust into the action.

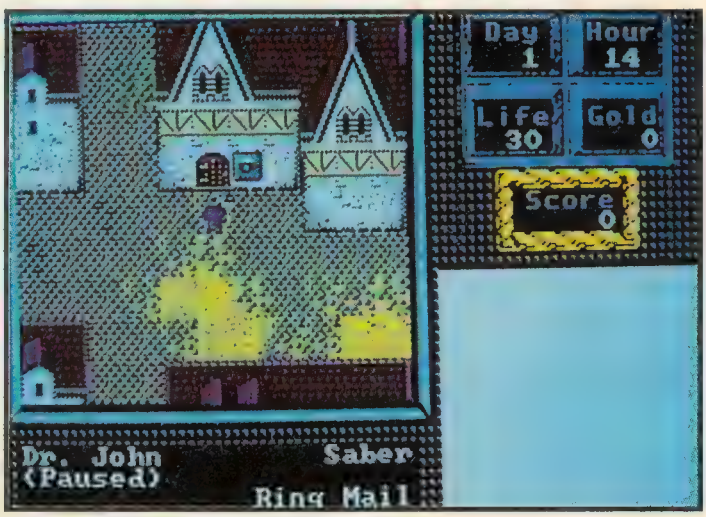
Everything starts just inside the gates to the city of Maramon. Since you can't leave the town, your only choice is to explore it. At the top right-hand corner of the screen, one box shows what day it is (i.e., how many days your adventure has lasted so far), while another relentlessly ticks away the hours of the day. Before you know it night falls, and you find yourself alone against a bunch of monsters.

The number of monsters roaming about is displayed at the bottom of the screen. As you destroy them, the number drops — as do your hit points. The action is so fast that it's almost impossible to stay alive until your third or fourth attempt. Fortunately, the game is easy to restart and equally easy to save. But even so, don't be surprised if you end up spending a full evening just trying to figure out what to do.



On a hunch, Dr. John heads toward the armorer's. He must spend his money wisely, protecting him for the night's activities.

Inside Steele's Armor Shop, Dr. John is presented with several choices. Ring Mail costs 150 gold pieces, which the scholar happens to have. It's economical and protective enough to save him from the nights' monsters.

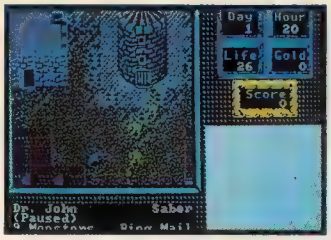


The sign on this building tells Dr. John that he has found a tavern. Inside, he's treated to friendly conversation and, he hopes, some good ale.

THE TOWN THAT DREADED SUNDOWN

Exploring means visiting a variety of locations and talking to the town's few residents. The two taverns are good places to strike up conversations, while the guest houses let you rest and regain your hit points. Inside the armor shop you can choose from several types of armor, and you can visit the weapons shop to find axes, swords, and bows of several kinds. Magical herbs and potions are available for a price in the herb store, or, for more powerful sorcery, stop by the magic shop where wands are sold. You can even visit City Hall, where the mayor of Maramon will show you a map and, once a week, pay you for your efforts.

Only two locations are open at night — the strongholds and the dark towers. There are three strongholds in the town, and several more in the dungeons underneath Maramon. You can grab 20 winks in the strongholds, but



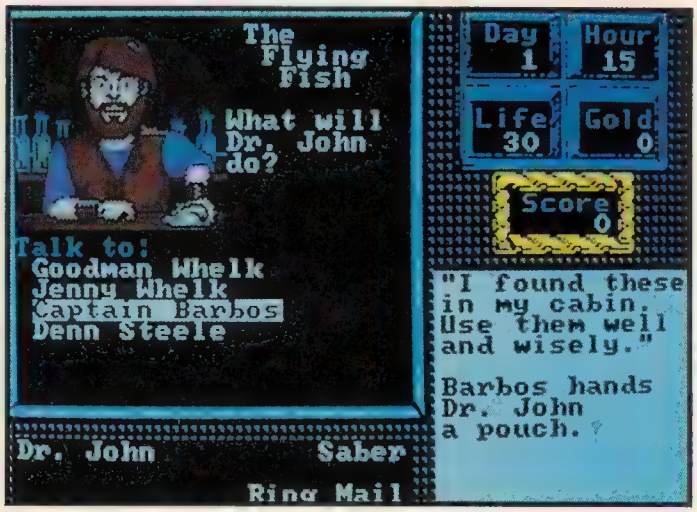
At the 20th hour of each day, night sets in and the monsters appear — in this case, streaming out of the northeast tower. There are nine of them, and Dr. John must try to destroy them all.

there are also hidden items to unearth (although you can find some of them only after you've visited the library). You can also store items in the strongholds for future use, as previous adventurers did in the strongholds beneath the town.

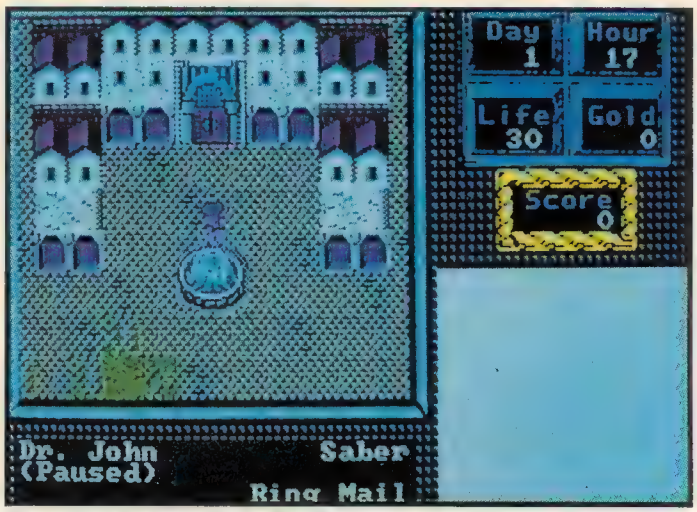
The dark towers are also open at night. There are four of them in Maramon, each opened with a different key (copper, brass, and so on). There are two ways of finding keys. The first is to defeat monsters and hope a key is left behind — an extremely rare occurrence. The other, more reliable way is to visit the rare book room of the Maramon library and study any appropriate volumes.

The library is the nicest touch in this game. You can enter the library at any time and search the open shelves, but there's not much worth learning there. To study a book in the closed stacks, you must donate 20 gold pieces (a large part of your meager treasury), but it's worth the price to improve your skills and characteristics with the information you find.

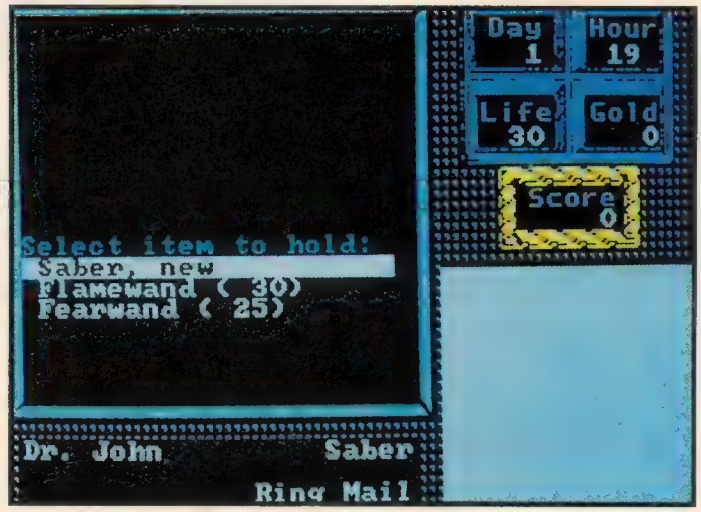
A 200-gold payment admits you into the rare book stacks. With each payment you can look at another book, each of which offers an extremely important clue. Only in this way, for instance, can you find



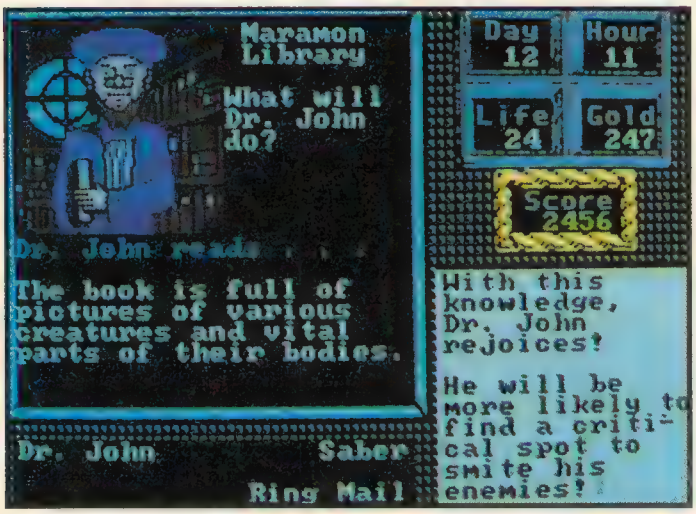
Hmmm. Visiting the Flying Fish to talk to a sea captain was a good move. Of course, there's no telling what the pouch he gave you contains, but how bad can it be?



You can find the mayor inside City Hall, but he can offer very little that's of use to you right now. Pay attention to the map, though, because it can give clues to the monsters' activities.



By typing "H," you can give Dr. John a different weapon. The wands are powerful, but they're extremely expensive to recharge. Stick with the sabre for now.


Maramon Library
What will Dr. John do?
Day 12
Hour 11
Life 24
Gold 247
Score 2456
Dr. John reads . . .
The book is full of pictures of various creatures and vital parts of their bodies.
With this knowledge, Dr. John rejoices!
He will be more likely to find a critical spot to smite his enemies!
Dr. John
Saber
Ring Mail

Inside the library, Dr. John has studied the swordplay section of the closed stacks. He'll be a better fighter thanks to his research.

the copper and brass keys to the towers.

LIONS AND TIGERS AND BEARS

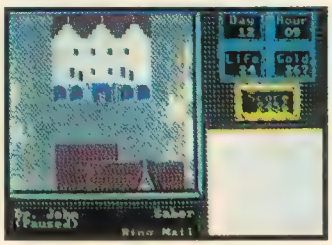
If *The Keys to Maramon* has one major flaw, it's that fighting monsters is too difficult. It might well be that this problem exists only in the MS-DOS version, where most people use the keyboard rather than the joystick. The problem is two-fold: first, the monsters move too fast; and second, the space bar isn't an effective fire button. Even with a joystick, however, the MS-DOS version suffers. It's just too easy for your character to get killed before you even have a chance to react.

You move your character with the directional keys on the numeric keypad, which sends the adventurer ripping across the screen, stoppable only with the "5" key on the keypad. When your character (using a hand weapon) comes adjacent to a monster or (using a missile weapon) within firing range, press the fire button to swing or shoot.

The system would work adequately if only the monsters didn't move faster than your character. It's easy to waste a huge number of arrows or precious wand charges shooting at nothing, and it's just as easy to suffer a high number of missile hits before you can close in on a bow-bearing enemy.

One way of getting around the problem — to some extent at least — is to learn the pattern in which the monsters emerge from the dark towers. Every Monday, for example, they come out of the northeast tower (clearly, these monsters are unionized). But if you wait outside the tower to kill the monsters before they emerge, you'll collect little or no treasure from them. And without gold, you can't do anything.

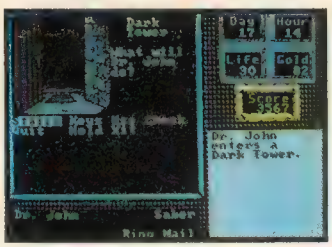
Therefore, you're forced to let them come out of the tower, hit them as soon as you can, and then chase the ones you missed all over town. This part of the game is supposed to be the most exciting, but in truth it is merely frustrating. The more monsters who escape alive, the worse off the town becomes and the more your reputation is tarnished.



Several days and many monsters later, Dr. John has enough money to do some serious studying in the library. The green numerals under "score" show that he can learn valuable things from the closed shelves as well.

Monsters attack only at night — every night, whether you're there or not. So even when you've found your way into the dark towers, you must pay strict attention to the hour of the day to allow yourself enough time to surface and take on the monsters. This time element is one of *Maramon's* subtle strengths because in far too many role-playing games nothing happens in the make-believe world unless you're present. Here, the dangers to the towns continue even if you're fighting battles below.

Many hours later (and after parting with much gold), Dr. John learns how to find one of the keys to the dark towers. This is his first breakthrough, but it's a major one.



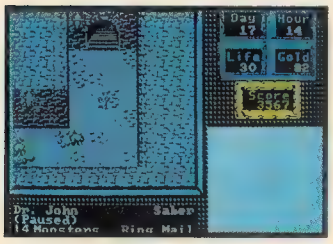
Having found the key to another dark tower, Dr. John enters and finds the stairs. Before he descends, you should save your position. Who knows what lurks in the tower's murky corridors?

START THE ADVENTURE WITHOUT ME

Though each player approaches a role-playing game in a different way, there are some general strategic moves that will make *The Keys to Maramon* more accessible. For example, you should probably choose to be the scholar in-

stead of one of the other characters. His brains compensate for his lacking the skills of the other characters.

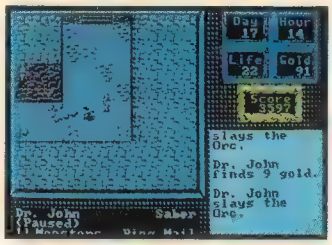
At the beginning of the game, hit ESC to pause the action, then use the map in the middle of the game manual to locate the Armor Shop (labeled "A") and its relation to your position. Go in and buy ring mail. Your next shop should be the tavern (marked "T") just to the southwest of City Hall. Look for Captain Barbos inside. When you talk to him, he'll give you something.



The monsters begin their attack just inside the tower door. These beasts won't be easy to destroy, but some magical herbs will prove helpful. It's worth the effort in the long run.

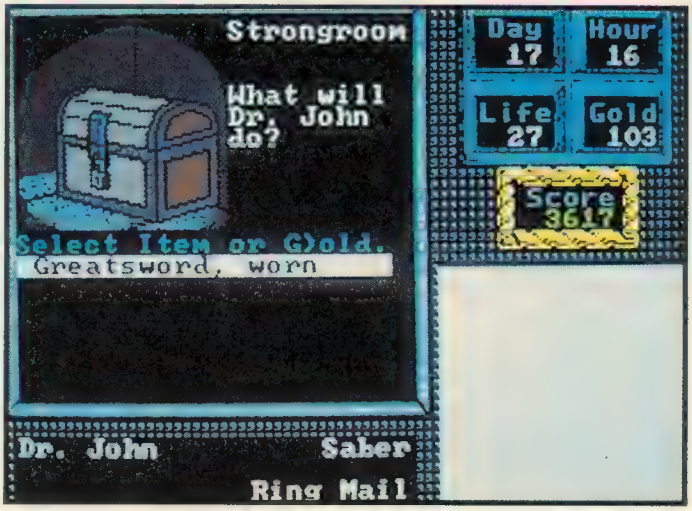
At this point, you should save the game so you can wander around and explore. At the 16th hour, go to the dark tower in the northeast corner of the town and save the game again. At the 19th hour, press "U" and consume some gonshi and mirget. At the 20th hour, monsters will stream out of the tower. Destroy as many as you can, pressing "U" when your strength goes below 15 to consume some sermin. Use a potion only when your strength gets even lower.

After you've defeated the monsters near the tower, save the game again and seek out the rest of the monsters. Destroy as many as you can, then move to a guest house, rest to regain your hit points, then press "P" to start day 2.

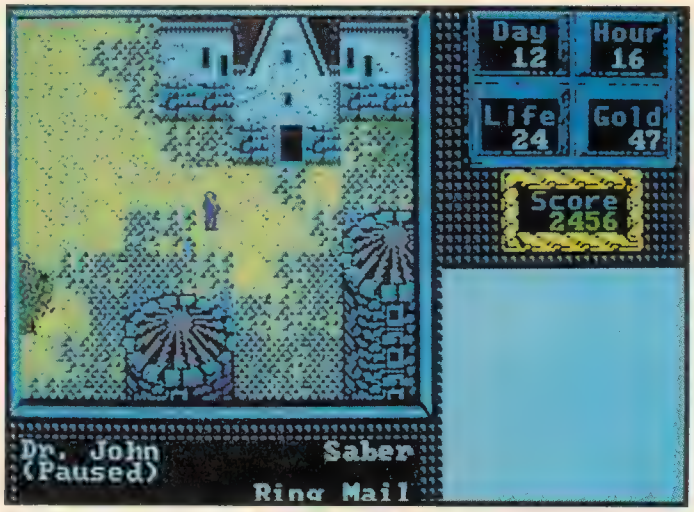


Having killed the orc, Dr. John finds a bag lying where the creature fought. It will likely contain either gold or magical herbs, but there's always a chance that it will hold another key.

Now hit the taverns and talk to everyone you can, trying to find out which tower the monsters emerge from each night. Keep fighting until you have 1000 experience points and 240 gold pieces, then enter the library. Examine the closed shelves twice (20 gold pieces each time), studying anatomy and swordplay. Then use your last 200 gold pieces to move on to the Rare Book shelves and look for information on keys. Wait until night falls, destroy all the monsters, and then head into your first dark tower.



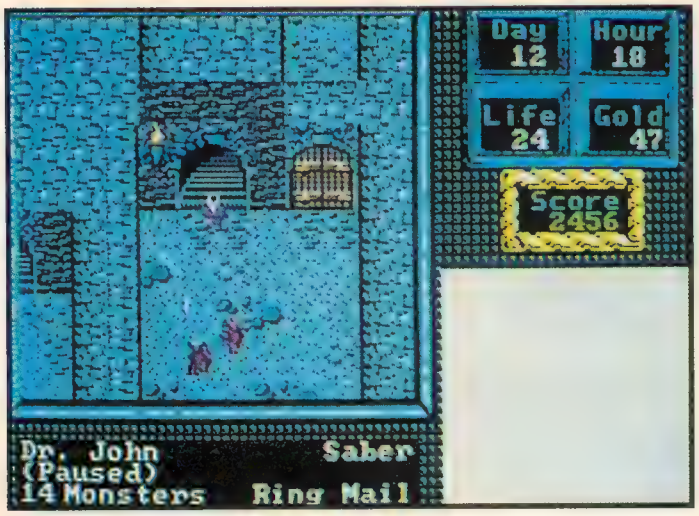
Inside one of the underground strongrooms, Dr. John finds a greatsword left there by a previous adventurer. It needs repairing, but nonetheless it's a valuable weapon.



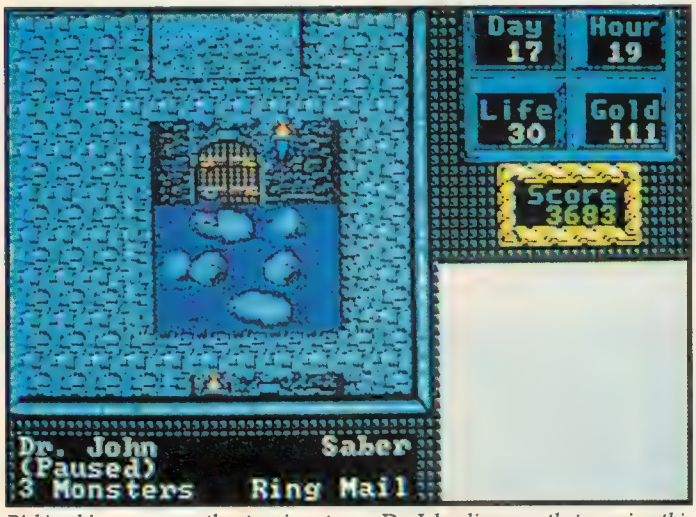
Dr. John knows that there's a key hidden inside this mansion just north of two dark towers. Another study session has proven to be a valuable investment.

THE BUSINESS OF PLEASURE

Maramon's graphics are very strong. Two-thirds of the screen is given over to a near-overhead view of the immediate area through which your character is walking. Shops, houses, strongrooms, and towers are clearly distinguished, and the night screens (on EGA at least) are even better-looking than the day versions. Because all of the fighting in town happens during the night hours, the quality of the night screens is vital. The characters them-



Under this tower are 14 monsters to destroy. The first have appeared, firing arrows as they speed toward the scholar.



Picking his way across the stepping stones, Dr. John discovers that opening this door requires not just one but two keys.

selves, while extremely small, are still easy to distinguish.

Two elements of *Maramon's* interface emphasize the ease of some aspects of game play. When you enter a building, you're presented with a menu. Choose Buy, and you're given a list of items available; the price (which isn't negotiable) is offered as part of the merchant's sales pitch. Select Fix, and the shopkeeper will tell you how much it costs to restore a weapon or a wand. Hold lets you switch weapons; Keys shows you what's on your keyring; Look enables you to search a strongroom; and Rest puts you in a nap mode to regain hit points and kill a little time.

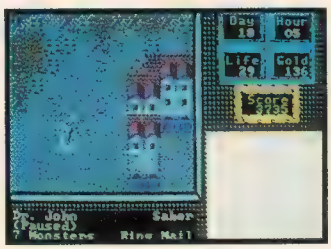
Study (in the library) takes you to a series of submenus asking which set of shelves you want to search. Choosing Talk yields a submenu showing who's available for conversation, and selecting someone to talk to produces some important bits of information.

Saving games and restarting old ones is the other strong interface feature. Select Quit while inside buildings (or Q while outside), and you get a submenu allowing you to save the current game, restart an old one, exit to DOS, or just continue without doing anything. Restarting means abandoning the current game, but often that's exactly what you want to do. Saving is easy, but it has one drawback -- there are only four save positions. You'll want to save often as you adventure through Maramon, so Quit becomes an important choice.

On the whole, however, *Maramon* isn't a worthy follow-up to *The Magic Candle* (which won the *Game Player's* award for best PC fantasy role-playing game for 1989). The action sequences — by far the most significant in the game — are clumsy and frustrating. Getting started takes far too long and would benefit from a short tutorial. Finally, there is no real sense of quest in the game. Finding keys in order to enter the dark towers isn't a great enough incentive in a genre that contains hordes of games with much more specific quests. The result is that *The Keys to Maramon* fails to addict the player. And in today's market, with the wealth of games available, addictiveness is vital to a game's success.

GP

This is even a better strongroom than the last one! Potions are priceless in this game, and the scholar needs an archer's



Be careful in Maramon after nightfall. A potential killer waits at the northwest corner of the building, just past the statue near City Hall. Once you get rid of him, only six monsters remain.

Hardware requirements: 640K minimum memory; VGA, EGA, CGA, Tandy 16-color, or Hercules graphics; hard disk optional but recommended; 10 MHz or faster computer recommended; mouse optional; supports sound boards.

In Verdigris, the armory supplies the material you need to keep going. Stop for arrows and darts—they're incredibly cheap.

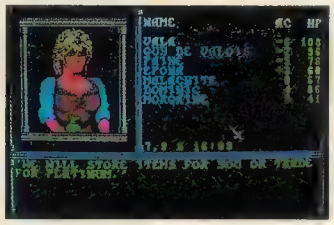
Secret of the Silver Blades

NEIL RANDALL

Secret of the Silver Blades is the fourth full-scale role-playing game in SSI's Advanced Dungeons and Dragons series. Fans of the Forgotten Realms will be pleased that it returns to that universe (the most recent AD&D game, *Champions of Krynn*, was set in DragonLance). Like the other games in the series, *Silver Blades* offers a playable, often addicting series of small quests, all leading towards a final battle with a great evil.

At the beginning of *Silver Blades*, you're magically summoned to the town of Verdigris in the valleys of the Dragon-Spine Mountains. The mayor of Verdigris, Priam, tells you all you need to know to start your adventures, and also offers you the money and equipment that the townspeople have rounded up for you. Your party's reputation as worthy adventurers has preceded you, and the people are anxious for your help.

Your first task is to explore Verdigris itself, but soon you'll want to follow your instincts (and the mayor's guidance) and jump through a portal in the north end of the mayor's home. This portal will take you to the area near the fabled Well of Knowledge. Once an area of Good (or at least Ambivalence), the well is now guarded by an ancient red dragon.



Deposit your hard-won treasure in Verdigris' vault or trade for gems. You'll need gems to appease the Well of Knowledge, so carry a bunch with you.

Hmm.... Just when you thought you were safe at home, the evil Black Circle has penetrated the peaceful town of Verdigris.

NAME AC HP
VALA -6 103
GUY DE VALOIS -2 99
PAINE -5 80
EPONA -3 84
MALACHITE 0 69
DOMINIC 4 88
MORGAINE 3 47
3,0 E 04:40
THE ROOM CONTAINS A SIMPLE ARCHWAY THAT BURSTS INTO SHIMMERING ENERGY. DO YOU STEP THROUGH?

Throughout this land are a number of portals leading to the area near the Well of Knowledge. Use them wisely — otherwise, finding your way around is tough.

And he's not the only enemy you'll find there. Scattered nearby are the members of two feuding religious orders, the Banites and the Black Circle. Both have soldiers and magicians, but it's clear from the outset that the Black Circle is winning the fight. And they seem to be the bad guys. The Well of Knowledge will point you toward the Circle's Inner Sanctum, a place you should visit as soon as you gain enough experience to rise a level or two from your current exalted status.

"Exalted" isn't far from the truth. Whether you create your own characters, import characters from *Pool of Radiance* or *Curse of the Azure Bonds*, or (most easily) use the computer's pregenerated party, your characters start at level six or higher. Magic-users and clerics already have a number of spells at their command, including important ones such as "Slay the Living" or "Raise the Dead" (available to clerics), or "Fireball," "Lightning Bolt," "Cone of Cold," and "Hold Monsters" (for the magic-users).

Some members of the pregenerated party are already of different character classes, and even your own newly created band can achieve multi-class status very quickly. In other words, you'll be fighting dangerous creatures, and the game accounts for the difficulty.

As with the other games in the AD&D series, battles are deadliest when the enemy can use magic. In any battle against the Black Circle or Banite forces, your best strategy is to do anything possible to get rid of the enemy mages and clerics. Your fighters are strong enough to look after themselves against veteran soldiers and huge monsters, but if a magic spell freezes your combatants in place, they will die quickly.

A magic-user with a "Fireball" spell is probably the most

The Well of Knowledge offers a great deal of useful information, but the cost is high. Keep your gems until you get there or you'll learn nothing.

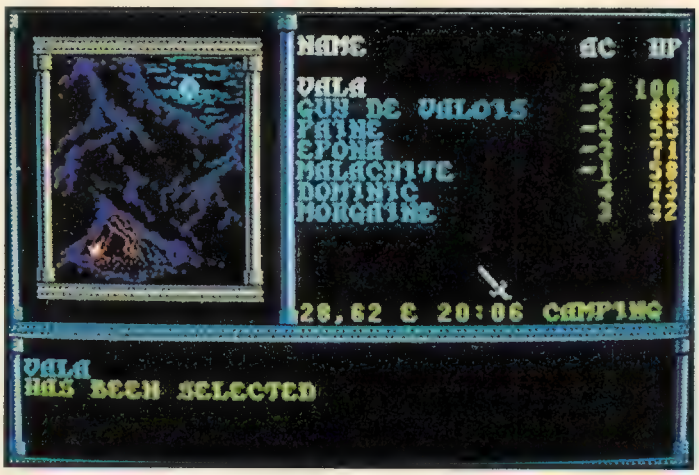
As you finally make your way to the sixth level of the mines, you're joined by a skilled fighter.

useful character in combat against either a host of enemies or an enemy party containing several magicians. Be sure your mage memorizes these spells whenever possible.

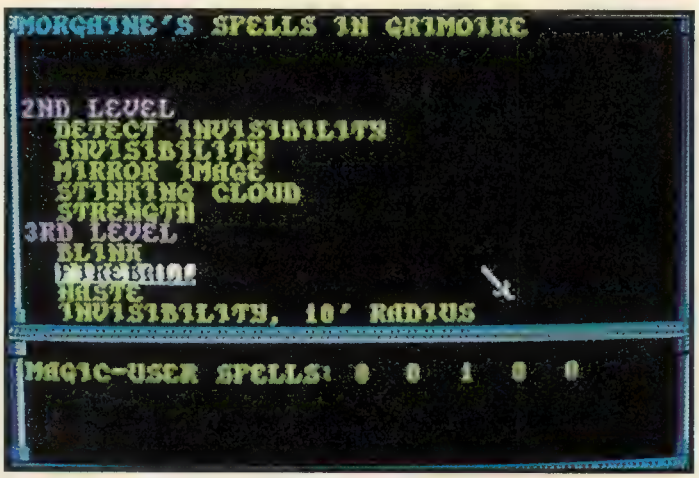
MINE OVER MATTER

Besides the Well of Knowledge and the Inner Sanctum of the Black Circle, you also visit a multi-level mine shaft. There's a temple there where you meet Derf the Dwarf. He directs you on a quest through the mines, during which you'll discover dungeons to explore. The nice part about this subplot is that having dungeons as part of a mine system actually makes logical sense. (As Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* points out, digging deep into ancient, haunted ground is an almost sure-fire way of finding ancient evils.)

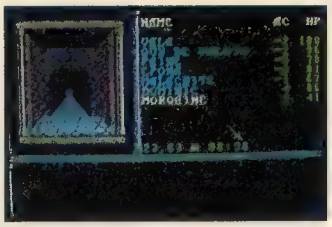
There's more. You'll need to find a couple of tombs, piece together a broken staff, and work your way into an ice-encased castle. Dreadlord is imprisoned inside the castle, and the Black Circle is trying to free him. Your task is to make sure he stays locked up. That means a great deal of exploring, a great deal of fighting, and a great deal of mapping underground and unknown territory. Known areas have a mapping system



Now that Vala has joined the party with a full 100 hit points, why not put her at the front of the line? After all, why risk your own hard-earned characters?



As the bottom of the screen shows, Morgaine can memorize one more level 3 spell. The "Fireball" spell is extremely powerful, so go with it.



As you walk along the long corridors of the mine, you'll come across one of many identical-looking entryways. You'll need to make a rudimentary map to avoid getting lost.

When you meet most monsters, you're given an opportunity to bribe them or talk to them. Sometimes they'll let you go, but usually they'll attack anyway. Consider fleeing.

in place, but the mines and the dungeons are confusing, even exasperating.

Over 40 types of monsters lie in wait for the careless adventurer — and that doesn't even count human enemies. There are basilisks who can turn your characters to stone; white and red dragons who can burn or freeze you; mastodons who are clumsy but brutal; and hydra who must be killed head by head. Add in frost and cloud giants, golems, griffins, minotaurs, medusas, arctic-dwelling remorhaz, and the rest, and you'll see that there's a deadly fight around almost every corner.

The standard treasure screen appears each time you find new treasure (usually after battles). If characters are overloaded, considering getting rid of other items first.

The core of *Silver Blades*, as in the rest of the AD&D series, resides in the Adventurer's Journal, which comes with the box. Read it to find the stories that characters relate to you, maps to help you navigate the uncharted areas, and all sorts of other useful information. In fact, the journal is so important to following the plot of the story that its use as a copy-protection tool is almost superfluous.

Secret of the Silver Blades takes longer to play than *Champions of Krynn*, but it's not as expansive as *Pool of Radiance*. Because of its unified plot line, however, *Silver Blades* is more engrossing than *Pool*, and its upper-level characters make it more sheer fun than *Curse of the Azure Bonds*.

There are minor changes from the other AD&D games. For example, gone from *Silver Blades* are the Tavern Tales that graced *Pool of Radiance* and *Curse of the Azure Bonds*. But since there's only one tavern in this game, that exclusion seems reasonable. Tavern rumors are now just smaller journal entries.

Silver Blades is a strong addition to the AD&D collection, and is certainly the best place for a newcomer to start with this system. If you didn't like the other games, you probably won't like this one either — but judging from the sales figures, there are a lot of role-playing game fans who do like the AD&D series. *Silver Blades* is sure to keep the sales figures climbing.

FITTING TOGETHER THE AD&D PUZZLE

It's easy, especially if you haven't played any AD&D adventures, to get lost in a sea of titles, worlds, and characters. Although it's possible to look at the games as individual adventures or divide them into the worlds of DragonLance and Krynn, the most effective way to evaluate their success is to look at the series as a whole.

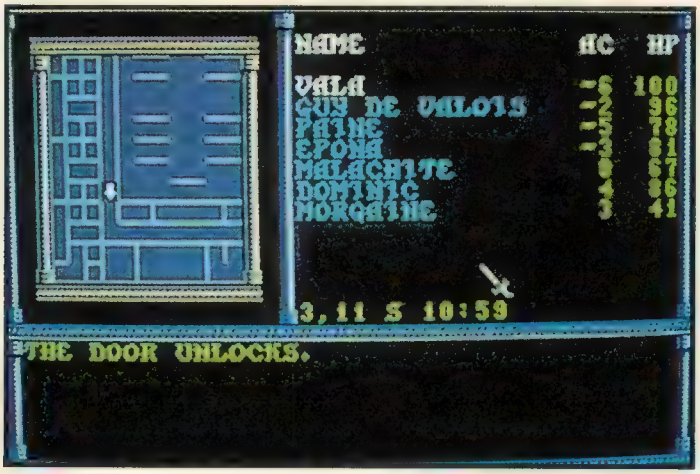
The best feature of AD&D games, demonstrated by *Silver Blades* as well as any of the others, is the adherence to the spirit and rules of the original role-playing board game. Advanced Dungeons and Dragons has its devotees, and to give them less than a true simulation of their favorite game would be commercial suicide.

Character creation is straight out of the AD&D rule books, and the user-definable

Here, the party lines up against a group of nasty looking margoyles. They're not too tough, but they have the ability to do damage.

NAME AC HP
VALA -6 100
GUY DE VALOIS -2 96
PAINE -5 78
EPONA -3 81
MALACHITE 0 67
DOMINIC 4 86
MORGAINE 3 41
61,74 E 05:08
YOU ARE IN OSWULF'S TOMB. IN THE MIDDLE OF THE ROOM ARE THE MORTAL REMAINS OF OSWULF.

Here's the tomb of Oswulf, a character you've heard about since the quest began.



Inside the temple, you have access to the overhead area map. When this map is active, you can play the entire game by maneuvering the small arrow.

icons reveal the designers' knowledge that AD&D players tend to use miniature figures to represent their characters. The character classes are well-represented (as are the character races), and, true to the spirit of AD&D's printed adventures, not all classes and races are possible in all adventures.

Also true to the original is the attention to difficulty level. *Pool of Radiance* is a lower-level adventure than is *Secret of the Silver Blades*, and the character levels are adjusted to reflect that difference.

Several other original features are equally well represented. AD&D's emphasis on destroying monsters and collecting treasure is foremost in the computer version, a point that easily could turn less dedicated role players against the series. More impressively — especially in *Pool of Radiance* — is the idea of characters seeking adventure, of setting out on sub-adventures that have their own goals and rewards.

AD&D's strange magic system, in which magicians can memorize only a limited number of spells (even if they're all the same spell) is also a fundamental part of the computer series.

The most important adherence to the AD&D board games, however, lies in the tactical combat system of the computer translations. AD&D has always been combat-intensive; players must defeat monsters to get experience points and treasure, and the only way they can defeat monsters is to fight them.

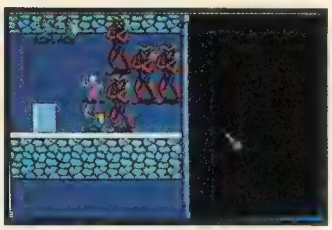
Working again from the idea of miniatures, the game designers offer a tactical battle system unlike any other in computer role-playing games. It maintains the detail, color, and atmosphere of fully advanced AD&D. It also maintains the time element — fighting battles is extremely time consuming, another point that some players don't appreciate.

THE CRITIC'S CORNER

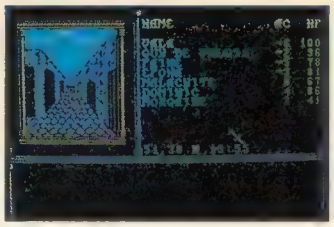
Despite the excellence of the computer translation of these games, though, several elements still need improvement. The series continues to refine itself by adding new elements to each game, but several areas — both major and minor — have still been overlooked in the AD&D games, as well as most other role-playing systems.

The minor criticisms include the method of loading saved games during game play. Right now, to stop the current game and use a saved one, you must exit to DOS and re-boot. There must be an eas-

Now these guys look mean! As you'll soon discover, however, the umber hulks are big but not very dangerous.



You'll find that these minotaurs are good attackers, but they have few hit points. A good fighter can destroy one with a single blow.



The color of the sky changes as night becomes day. By dawn's light you can see several doors near the entrance to the mines.

ier way. In addition, there's one area of copy protection that is infuriating: Sometimes when you try to save a game, you are asked for a keyword from the manual. Apart from the possibility of losing hours of effort, this system shatters the role-playing experience.

The games also need an automatic mapping system that works when the party is in places where the overhead area map is unavailable. Like the system in *Might and Magic II*, this system would create area maps as you explore a region.

A more predominant criticism involves the same tactical combat system we've already praised. Yes, the procedure is admirable, but these games need a way of fighting battles without going through the system. For each encounter there should be an option to let the computer do your fighting off-screen for you and then report only the results.

Perhaps this would be possible only if you've defeated creatures of the same type once or twice before, thus eliminating the tedium of constantly fighting the same foes again. Right now, you can sometimes flee from enemies to avoid them, but this is neither consistent nor fully satisfactory. And since you can place your characters under computer control while fighting the battle anyway, having it all happen off-screen to save time seems an easy design step.

In the original board game, a good Dungeon Master could create suspense in a number of ways. Playing the computer translations -- and most role-playing games have this problem -- is not particularly suspenseful. It would be nice to be able to slink along corridors and spy on enemies ahead of you, creep up and listen in on conversations, hide in dark corners when danger is overwhelming, and so on. Instead, in the computer version monsters simply jump you. Even when there are 15 of them, they approach you without your knowledge. For logical reasons alone, this feature needs to be reconsidered.

Of course, if SSI's AD&D games weren't strong, there would be no point in suggesting revisions. *Secret of the Silver Blades* takes the Forgotten Realms series one step closer to a thoroughly playable role-playing system. There were so many good changes implemented between *Silver Blades* and *Champions of Krynn*, the third of the Forgotten Realms series and the first of the DragonLance adventures, that it will be interesting to see how the series develops from here.

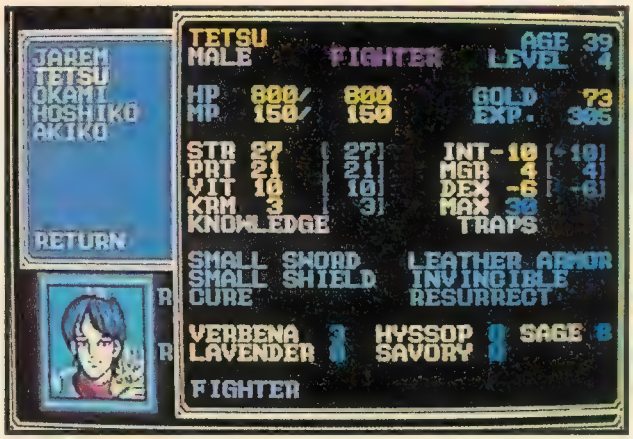
GP

NAME AC HP
VALA -6 100
GUY DE VALOIS -2 96
PAINE -5 78
EPONA -3 81
MALACHITE 0 67
DOMINIC 4 86
MORGAINE 3 41
14,2 N 11:29
'CONGRATULATIONS, YOU FOUND ALL OF THE PIECES.' HE TAKES THE PIECES AND PUTS THEM BACK TOGETHER. THEN HE MUMBLES THE NAME TYR AND THE STAFF PIECES GLOW. WHEN THE GLOW FADES, THE STAFF IS REPAIRED.

Now that all the pieces of the staff have been recovered, you can return to the temple, where Derf the Dwarf will offer additional help.

Full-color screens like this mine entrance graphic appear throughout Secret of the Silver Blades. *Each one leads to something important.*

Hardware requirements: 512K minimum memory; EGA, CGA, or Tandy 16-color graphics; mouse and joystick optional; supports sound boards.



By selecting View Character from the options screen, you can see how your characters are faring. Tetsu's stats are much higher here than they were when the game began.

Sorcerian

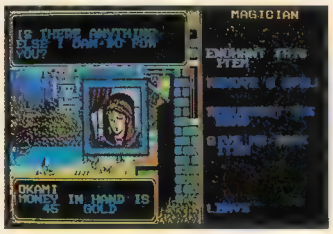
NEIL RANDALL

Sorcerian is among the best-selling computer role-playing games in Japan, where role-playing games on computer or videogame machines usually sell like, well, rice. It's no surprise, therefore, that the game is now being imported into North America. This import is clearly the result of **Sierra's** recent scouting of the Japanese marketplace.

For fans of Sierra games, *Sorcerian* will come as something of a surprise. It doesn't have the traditional Sierra interface or its game-play. Instead there's something new: a four-character party that works its way through 15 different action scenarios. In that sense, this game is much closer to, say, Nintendo's *Link* games than to most current fantasy role-playing games for PCs.

But that's not to denigrate this addicting package. *Sorcerian* is nothing if not highly playable, and its playability translates very nicely into replayability. The adventures get more and more challenging as they go along, and you can start any of them from scratch whenever you wish. What this means is that you can develop your characters at your leisure, sending them on a mission only when you feel they're ready. However, they'll age in the process, so don't take too long.

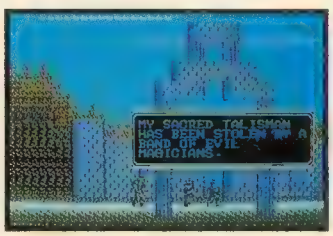
The characters can visit one of several shops or locations in town. They can train, purchase items, use the magicians' services — even hear a song.



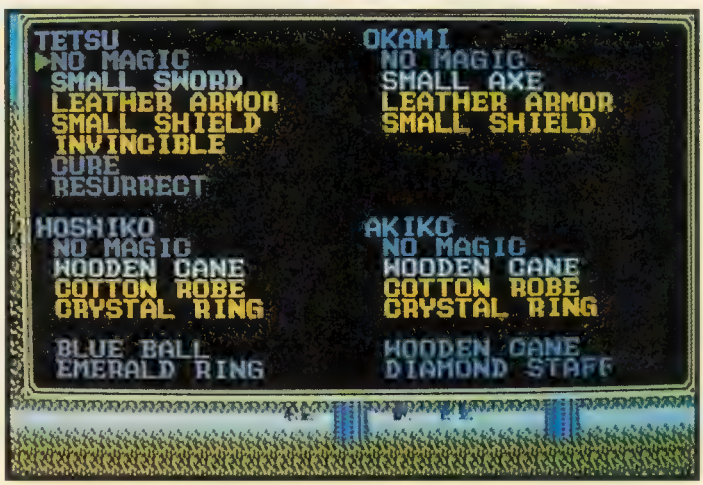
At the magician's shop, you can have items enchanted with particular kinds of magic. This takes time, but it's well worth it.

A TALISMAN WITH THE POWER TO CONTROL
RETURN THE TALISMAN TO ITS GOLDEN
PEDESTAL BEFORE DESTRU CAN USE IT
TO RULE THE WORLD.

Once you decide to start adventuring, you must choose a scenario. The second scenario is "The Lost Talisman."



The party passes under a huge arch, where they receive instructions from the voice of a god. This adventure is fairly straightforward; others are much harder to determine.



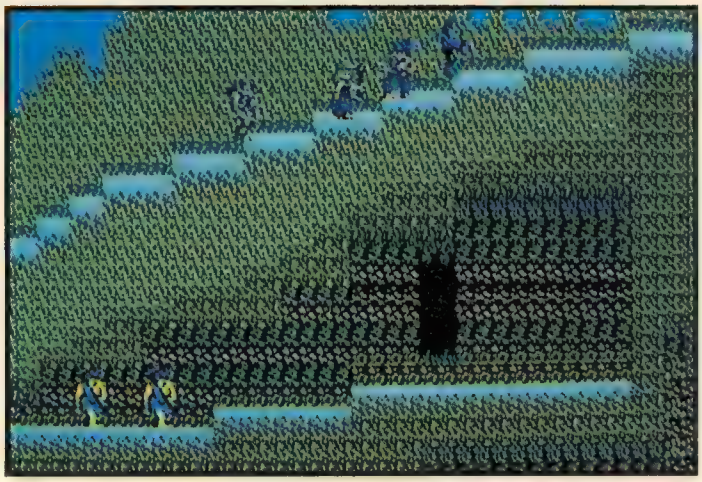
Press "E" to see the equipment screen. From here, you can select the items your characters will use. This is the way to use magical items.

WHICH WITCH?

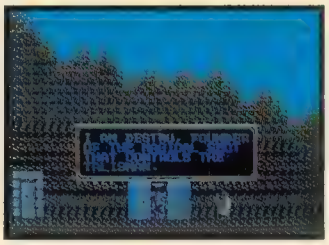
The game comes with four stock characters, but you can create 20 of your own. The idea is that four characters form a party, but not necessarily the same four each time. Each character begins as a relative youth, aging one year with each adventure (i.e., anytime he returns to the town). They need experience to increase their capabilities, hit points, magic use, and so on, but it's sometimes better to leave one kind of character at home while another kind does what has to be done.

All characters have occupations (no full-time adventurers in this game), and their occupations yield annual income. Characters can enter training, which usually takes two years, or they can have an item imbued with magic (which takes three years or more). You can advance the time to have them come away from training, or you can run another set of characters through an adventure to let them grow as well. As characters age, they take on different appearances, and their capabilities change accordingly.

You begin a session of *Sorcerian* by forming your party



Two paths are available here: up the steps or through the door below. Eventually, you must go both ways, but for now the upper route is in order.



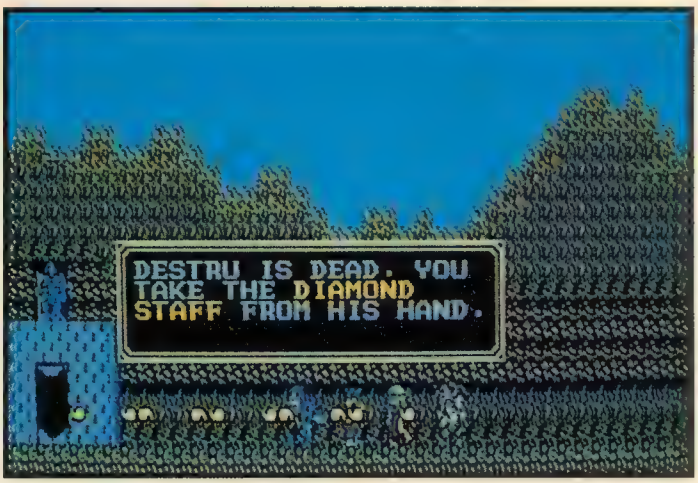
You've found Destru right off the bat! Watch out, though, because he is a deadly enemy. Keep racing toward him, hitting him with your sword as you advance.

and selecting an adventure. There are 15 of these, divided among three linked scenarios. Each adventure works similarly: You travel across land, through doors, into dungeons, and among buildings, trying to find the items and the locations that help you solve a specific problem.

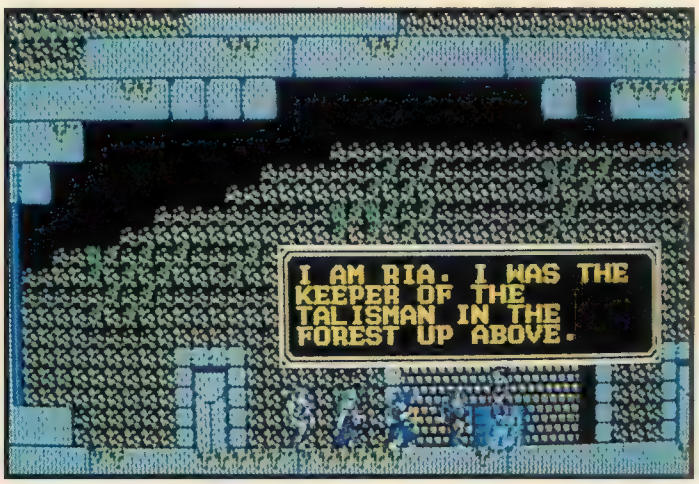
For example, in the first adventure, "The Stolen Scepter," you must find a magical royal scepter and return it to the king. To succeed, you must find a blue ball, a diamond-shaped stone, and the scepter itself. Opposing you are bats, gnomes, rats, ouks, goblins, bogards, skeletons, and a hydra. You'll also find assistance from a recently defeated warrior, who lies injured in a room by himself. Find him and execute his suggestions in order.

As you might expect, the adventures become more difficult as the game progresses. "The Lost Talisman" offers a larger area to explore, and finding five items is necessary to your success. One of your opponents here is Destru the magician, who dissolves and reforms himself as quickly as you can react. Make sure you have visited the throne room in the city to advance in levels before tackling this mission.

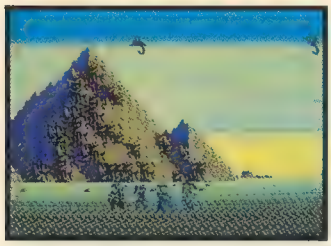
Most of the goals in the adventures are interesting. In



In no time Destru will be defeated. Now, with diamond staff in hand, you can get through the diamond-shaped doors down below.



Ria awaits through a strange set of doors. He'll help you figure out what to do. Listen to him carefully — his advice is always correct.



In the fourth scenario, the party passes by a huge mountain in the distance. Flying creatures swoop down on them from above.

"Lucifer's Floodgate," you must find a way to open the floodgate to let water back into the kingdom of Pentawa. In "The Master of the Dark Marsh," you must find a way to convince a young woman to leave the red dragon who tricked her into marrying him.

"The Riddle of the Red Jewel" demands that you neutralize the mysterious gem that is causing madness, while "The Cursed Ship" features a ship's captain whose son refuses to leave a dangerous ship and return to the safety of his home. In "The Missing Magician," you must rescue the royal magician and return him to the kingdom, and in "The Water of Life" you must find and return a powerful, essential potion.

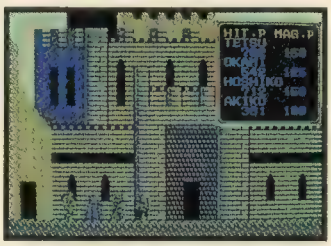
In other words, there are lots of quests and lots of goals. Certainly, this variety is admirable. But *Sorcerian* suffers somewhat in that the variety of adventures is not matched by an equivalent variety in game play. For the most part, each adventure plays much the same as the last, although such a criticism could easily be leveled at practically any role-playing game.

NUTS AND BOLTS

Basically, this is a game in which you scroll through different screens bashing monsters and searching for important items as you travel. With the cursor keys, you maneuver the characters across the screens, looking for doors to go through or stairs to climb. When you find a door, you either bypass it or go through it, knowing, however, that eventually you'll have to visit all locations.

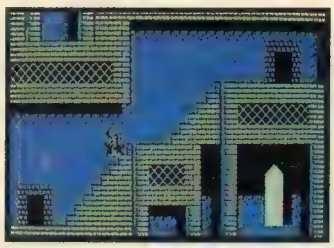
The party moves as a line of three or four (some adventures allow only three characters), and you can only set their order in town at the mission's beginning. When you meet monsters, you can press the space bar to activate swords or axes, and the return key to fire arrows or magic bolts. Then it's on to the next screen and the next group of monsters.

Even here, though, in what appears a simple semi-arcade game, *Sorcerian* manages to shine. Battles are very fast and easy to manage, and even if your characters get killed, it doesn't take long to restart the adventure and get back to where you were (you can also save the game as you go).



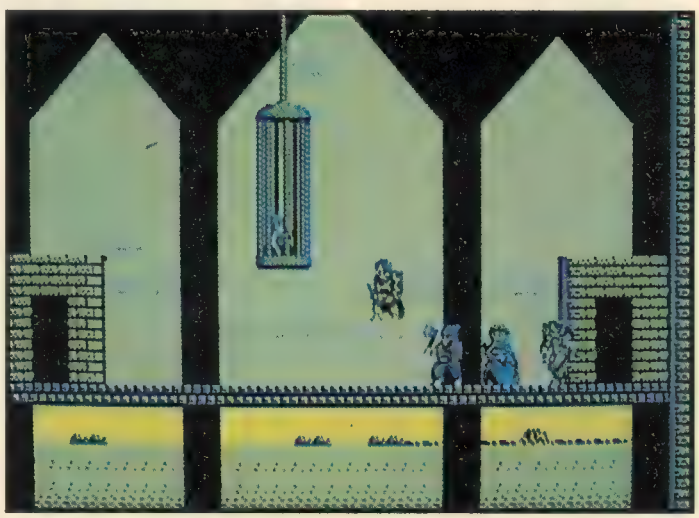
There's a castle located behind the mountains. You won't finish the adventure without exploring the castle, so get going!

Secondly, this game requires no special potions, spells, or physicians to restore hit points. If you can find a place where it's safe not to move at all, just rest long enough and your hit points will restore themselves. This feature eliminates some of the frustrations of other role-playing games, where poison can down your entire party while you search in vain for a cure.



Many staircases adorn this part of the castle. What lies though the door at the bottom of this one?

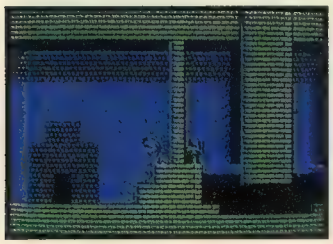
You also won't have to figure out elaborate methods to solve problems. All you have to do to collect an item is walk into it or leap up to take it; once you have the item, you use it



Leaping up, Tetsu examines the young woman trapped in the cage. He sees no clues, though, as to how to release her.

and walking towards an object or jumping up at it. In other words, you don't have to tell the game what object you want to use or why you're there. The game simply determines whether or not you possess the item in question, then implements its effect. Again, the result is quick, unfrustrating play.

To get far in *Sorcerian*, however, you must learn its unconventional magic system. Certainly, the system seems extremely rich: There are different spells for the gods of the sun, the moon, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn. Just as certainly, there is a wealth of spells from which to choose, since aligning with a god gives you spells from the books of herbal, offensive, defensive, and healing magic.



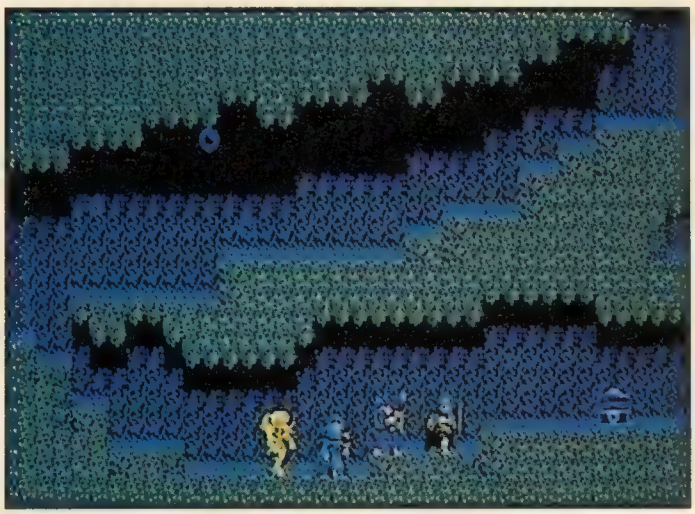
When you run into this pool of water and a chimney of some kind, you must figure out a way past the obstacles, or you'll have to turn around and go back.

But learning how to use these spells is far from easy, and much of your early playing will be spent ignoring the magic system completely. Once you learn it, magic is very powerful — but be prepared to spend some time figuring out how it works. The instruction manual, generally quite good, is not very helpful on the actual mechanics of magic.

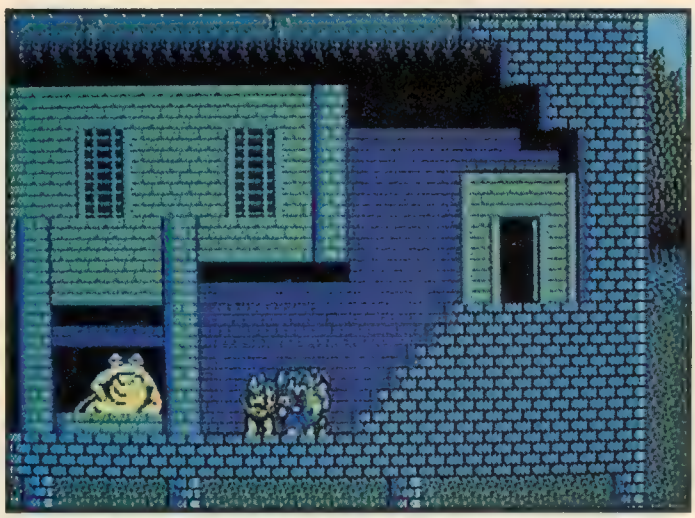
THING ONE AND THING TWO

To help you get started, let's briefly run through the first two scenarios.

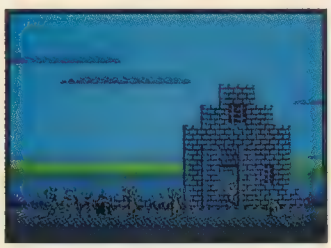
In "The Stolen Scepter," your goal is to collect the royal scepter. The trick here is to work your way through the dungeons methodically, keeping in mind the layout of the floors. Fight when you must, but fighting by itself won't help you much. Be sure to use both



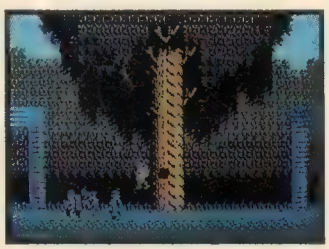
The party works its way through the caverns and finds a treasure chest. Go up and see what's inside — and keep your fingers crossed in hope that it's a magic item.



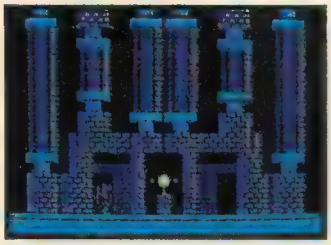
Well, you seem to have found an ugly bullfrog. The man you met at the first of the adventure was right — his daughter is no longer very attractive.



Dead things rise from the ground at the beginning of the first scenario in the second set of adventures. This one looks tough.



You've found an enormous tree with what seems to be a window. But how do you find out what's inside? And where do the arches lead?



At the beginning of a later scenario, you must work your way through many mysterious pillars. That yellow artifact is a strange machine.

the space bar and the return key when you fight to maximize use of weapons and magic.

You should collect the blue ball near the first door immediately, then drop down and start exploring. Go through the first door and find the statue, then place the blue ball in the "lock" and go through the door. Look for the injured warrior, who will give you hints, and go back to him whenever you complete one of the submissions.

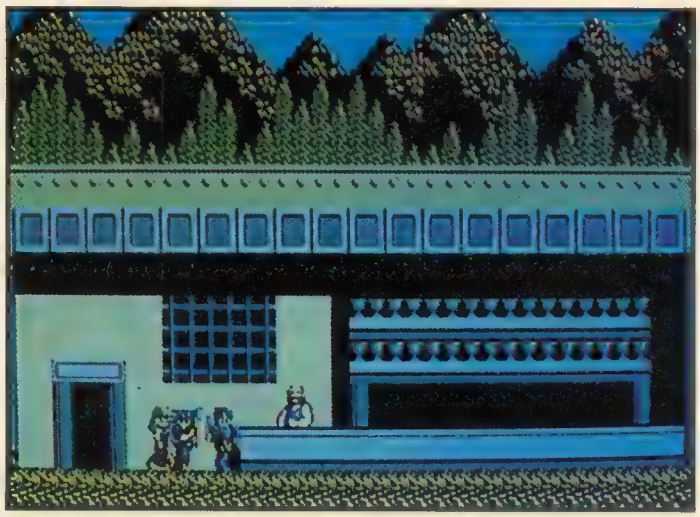
Now get the jewel from one statue and give it to the other, then destroy the dragons for a good boost in experience points. If you remember that your goal is the *scepter*, you won't go far wrong. You'll find it by opening up the blocked passage, but you won't find the passage until you've done some thorough exploration.

"The Lost Talisman" is considerably more difficult. Here, you must find the magician who is hiding in the caves, then find and free his brother. Eventually, you'll work your way down past the falling ceiling trap (use the Dash command to avoid injury), at which point you're directed back toward the room with the falling ceiling to fetch the dungeon key from a corner.

A little later you find more of those globe-like machines and a new item to your right. What's going on here?

Sometime during this adventure, you must take on Destru the magician. You can defeat him by racing up to him, then hitting him with your sword and using your magic whenever he becomes solid. With his diamond-shaped key, you can place the golden pedestal where it belongs. You can use the dungeon key to get the golden pedestal out of its locked room.

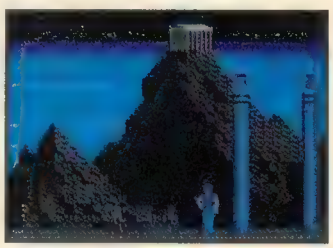
You lose the pedestal when you climb up the well, but you can recover it when you go back down. You need to find a jar of sap to destroy the barrier that surrounds the talisman itself. With the barrier out of the way, you must defeat the huge monster that descends upon you — hit it with your sword every time it lands. Then get the talisman and collect your reward.



At the start of another late scenario, you discover a town where the stores have nothing to sell. This wine shop is completely empty.

Hmmm.... Not only have you angered Zeus, but this enormous bird doesn't think very highly of you either.

When you explore the later scenarios, you'll quickly realize that without the experience gained from the early scenarios, you would be powerless to continue. But even starting them whets your appetite to continue the game.



Clearly, you've reached a goal. Let's see what this god-like figure has to say, then worry how to go about accomplishing the mission.

Sorcerian is highly enjoyable. As quick, late-night role playing it excels, and you'll have no trouble maintaining interest as you work through the adventures. If this is an example of what we can expect by Sierra's liaison work in Japan, there's a great deal to look forward to.

GP

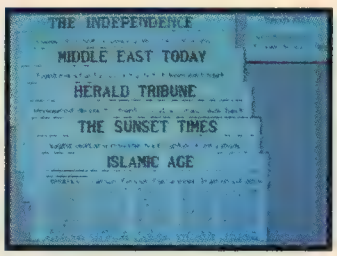
Hardware requirements: 512K minimum memory; VGA or EGA graphics; joystick optional, supports sound boards; 8mhz or faster recommended; hard drive recommended.

CONFLICT:

WILLIAM R. TROTTER

Good morning, Prime Minister. It's December 29, 1996. You've just been sworn in as chief executive of the nation of Israel (your illustrious predecessor was assassinated a few days ago). It's a sunny day here in the Middle East, and all hell is about to break loose in ten different directions. It looks like it's just another day at the office.

Your job is to protect and preserve your nation — even if it means engineering the collapse of every other regime around you ... even, perhaps, some with whom you currently enjoy good diplomatic relations. Each game-turn covers a period of one month, and during that time you must make crucial decisions in diplomacy, intelligence, and national defense.



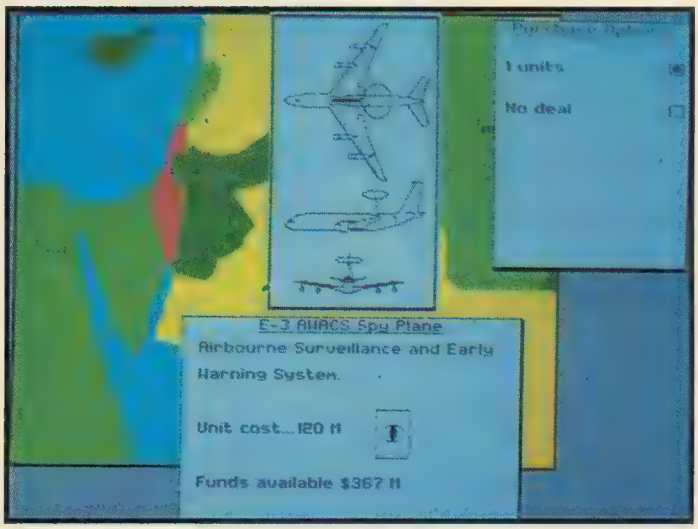
Every game-turn starts off with a world news roundup. This isn't hard intelligence, of course, but it's a useful barometer of world opinion.

At least you have a lot of input, including summaries of the world press and top-secret reports of the Mossad, arguably the most efficient intelligence-gathering agency in the world. You can access each neighboring country and receive a briefing on that nation's internal conditions and its attitude toward Israel.

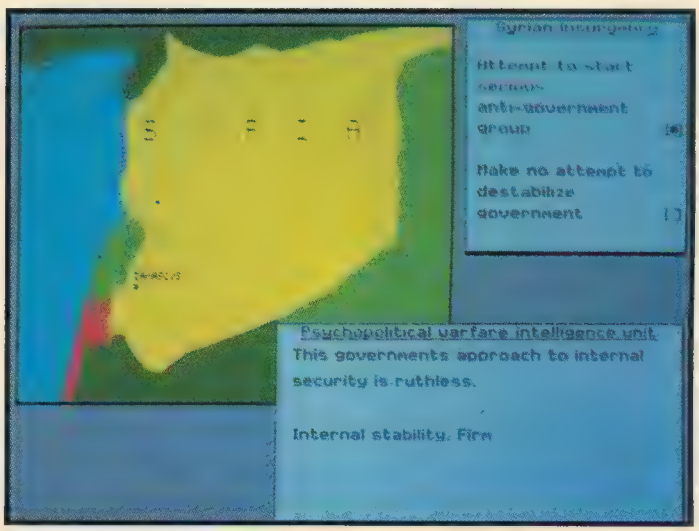
From your Foreign Office come reports on your current level of prestige and the general level of tension throughout the region. Bear in mind that, while rising tensions automatically increase the danger of war, under certain circumstances such conditions may work to your advantage.

After you've studied the Big Picture, it's time to make decisions in the realm of diplomacy. *Conflict* from **Virgin Mastertronic** does a good job of simulating the ambiguity, intertwining, and Byzantine intricacy of Middle Eastern diplomatic maneuvering. You may downgrade diplomatic relations and thereby provoke another state, which may be either dangerous or useful depending on the deviousness of your overall strategy.

You can access crisp, authoritative intelligence summaries about any neighboring country.



Enemies are close; warning times are short. You'd better invest in a few AWACS planes to help you keep an eye on things.


anti-government group
Make no attempt to destabilize government
Psychopolitical warfare intelligence unit.
This governments approach to internal security is ruthless.
Internal stability. Firm

Want to destabilize the Syrian government? Send in your psychopolitical hit squad — you may get lucky.

MIDDLE EAST POLITICAL SIMULATOR

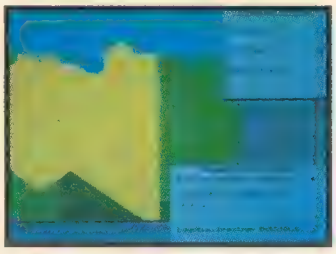
Or you may foster close diplomatic ties — even alliances — with another country (even if you despise them), not for any real benefit to either of you, but to influence indirectly the outcome of a war between two other countries.

Of course, given the nature of the Middle East, you can also spend months fabricating a subtle, Machiavellian web of intrigue, only to have it blown up in your face by a deranged zealot driving a car bomb.

If you want to survive long enough to celebrate your first anniversary as Prime Minister, you must learn how to make use of the Mossad's expertise. It's a crack intelligence agency, and through its operatives you can channel Israeli funds and arms to insurgent factions, or to the governments trying to squash revolts. In longer and deeper games, you may also be able to order really dramatic covert action: assassinations, coups, counter-coups, and so on.

Of course, while all these things are going on, you still have a country to run and long-range strategies to implement. You must continually upgrade your country's arsenal to match existing or potential threats, but even that isn't a straightforward task in the Middle East.

If you look for too many bargains on the international arms market, or if you act too openly aggressive for too long a time, you may alienate the U.S. Congress and find yourself unable to buy high-tech equipment when you need it the most. There are times, too, when the hardware gets used and the Israeli Defense Force gets sent into battle.



Look for disputes between third parties that can be exploited to your advantage. This Libyan-Egyptian border squabble has possibilities.

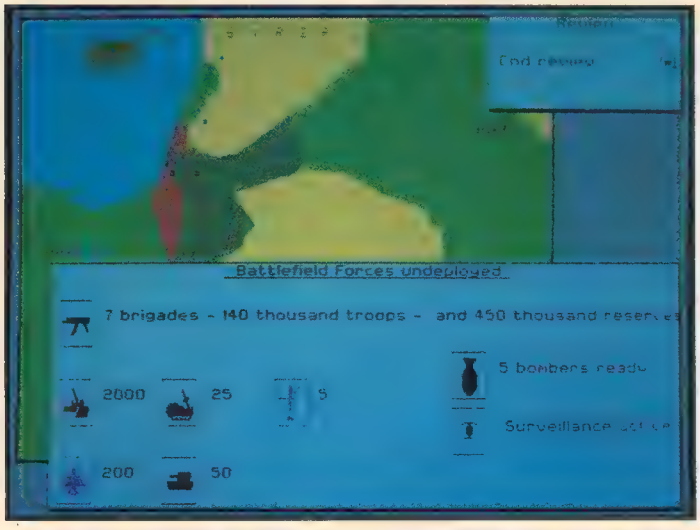
You can launch preemptive strikes, but only if you're willing to pay the price of international outrage. And if you're willing to divert huge sums for a long period of time, you can even develop a nuclear stockpile — just in case. (In this matter, of course, *Conflict* departs from accuracy in the interests of game play; in reality, the Israelis have had the bomb for years.)

To make your job even more interesting, various neighboring states are energetically trying to ruin your country even as you're (sometimes) trying to destabilize theirs. Expect sabotage, riots, border raids, and hostage crises. The works.

Game players who enjoyed *Balance of Power* will find much the same kind of experience here. *Conflict* is not a fancy game — there is no animation and none of the deluxe touches you expect nowadays from a top-of-the-line program. The graphics, though clear and crisp, are elementary in the extreme.

Still, in its stripped-down fashion, *Conflict* covers all the bases, leaves out nothing essential, and plays quite smoothly. If it does not offer the kind of layered, in-depth play that enthralls for days on end, it is a darn good beer-and-pretzels, off-the-shelf game that can be learned and played quickly. And at a suggested list price of under $15, it's a genuine bargain.

GP



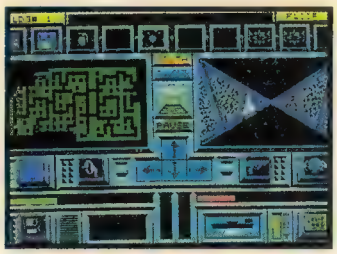
It is wise to review the state of your armed forces every other month or so.

Hardware requirements: 384K minimum memory; EGA and CGA graphics.

DAY OF THE VIPER

STEPHEN POOLE

You're familiar with the events that led up to your current predicament. It all started in the middle of the 20th century, when the notion that mankind could significantly improve the quality of life through the use of robots was quite popular. It's not hard for you to understand why the concept was looked on favorably — indeed, robots could be commanded to do any job considered too dangerous, or even too boring, for humans.



The Viper's Plotter Display function (left monitor) is invaluable in navigating the halls of the SLDF defense complex. The small red objects in the hallways are traps, and the colored horizontal and vertical bars indicate doorways.

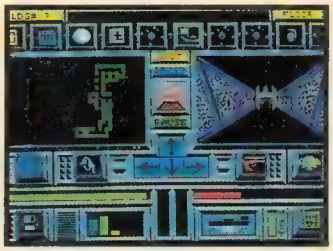
Of course, robots could not do jobs that required creative or intuitive thought — that is, until the discovery of neurosynthetic melding in the mid-28th century made it possible to endow androids with those abilities. That led to the creation of a prototype unit called GAR-1 (Genetic Android Race).

Unfortunately, GAR's developers didn't know that one of the side effects of the melding process was incredible neural pain—enough pain to send GAR on a murderous rampage against all life forms. GAR's onslaught has lasted three centuries and caused the loss of countless lives. Now it's your duty to repel GAR's latest attack.

The situation doesn't look too promising for the Sun League Defence Force (SLDF) when you begin *Day of the Viper*, a new science-fiction release from **Accolade**. GAR's intergalactic army of robots has completely overrun the SLDF's main defense base in the Parin sector. The base was the site of advanced weapons research, and major breakthroughs had just been made when GAR's forces launched a successful assault and captured the complex.

The object of *Day of the Viper* is to infiltrate the base and reactivate the Security Defense Computer. Before GAR's forces destroyed the central program, it was downloaded to 25 floppy disks hidden throughout the complex. You must find the disks, upload them to the main computer, and start up the defense computer in order to activate the security system and destroy all of the intruders and their ships. This may sound simple enough, but you'll quickly learn that your success depends more on how you manage available resources than on the speed of your trigger finger.

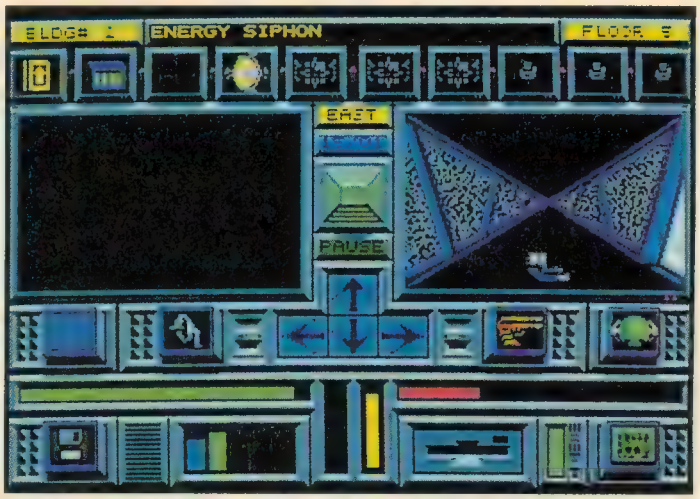
You won't actually be entering the base in person. Luckily, the same company that developed GAR has created a remote-control attack android called the Viper V. Its construction is similar to GAR's, except the Viper is completely under your control.



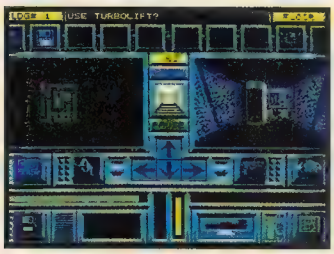
This huge, rolling robot looks imposing, but if you find its weak spot you can easily dispatch it with a couple of blasts from your Viper's laz gun.

There are a total of 25 floors (five buildings with five floors each) to explore. Each floor is a huge maze, and you must maneuver the Viper through the hallways and rooms in search of hidden floppy disks. Since the base was the site of experimental weapons research, you can also expect to find all sorts of valuable equipment scattered in the hallways and rooms of each building.

Controlling the Viper is thankfully simple, due mainly to the excellent console display. The console is divided into two monitors that share the screen with displays that tell you shield and weapon strength, energy supply, the amount of damage you've inflicted on an enemy, and a list of any accessories the Viper is carrying.



Anything your Viper does requires energy, so an energy siphon is a handy item to have. You can use the siphon anytime you find a power room.



Turbolifts take you to various floors on each building. After you reach the bottom floor of a building, you need to find the shuttle room to move to the next building in the complex.

The right monitor lets you see everything the Viper unit sees. The left monitor performs numerous functions, but the one you'll use the most is the Plotter Display. This maps out each floor as you conduct your search and is essential to the success of your mission. Don't lose the display by carelessly wandering over a trap or mine — you have little hope of successfully navigating even one level of the complex without it.

Pressing F7 changes the left monitor into the Electronic Notebook. This is where you can record the coordinates of important rooms or objects. As you explore each floor, you need to remember the location of places you've been and things you've seen or left behind; after only one level you'll thank the game's designers for including this feature.

To keep the notebook manageable, delete any unnecessary information. If you recorded the location of a hand grenade, for example, delete that entry when you return and pick it up.

If your Viper runs out of energy, it will shut down — so you need to be on the lookout for energy spheres to replenish the unit. Another device that can help you refuel the Viper is an energy siphon, which lets you repeatedly draw energy from the base's main reactors.

GAR has placed numerous guards in all the buildings (GAR himself is also lurking about), and you can expect constant encounters with his troops. The Viper is outfitted with a laz gun and deflector shield, both of which can be replaced by stronger and more efficient models as the game progresses. Some guards are more difficult to destroy than others; before long you'll know which ones are easily subdued and which ones require massive firepower to eliminate.

You're frequently faced with combat in *Day of the Viper*, and the basic weapon system is relatively easy to learn and use. It does, however, have a few mildly annoying characteristics.

You have to activate your weapon system manually for every skirmish, then use either the keyboard or a mouse to position the crosshair superimposed over the monitor. Unfortunately, the Viper cannot move at all while its weapon system is activated — it truly is a case of "fight or flight," with no practical way to retreat while issuing cover fire.

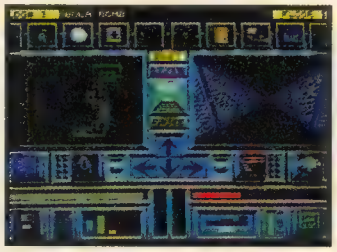
The deflector shield also needs to be manually activated. It would be nice if you could set the shield to activate whenever you turn on the weapon system. This would save valuable time in a sudden confrontation with a band of GAR's robotic minions.

You'll welcome finding other weapons — bolo bombs, hand grenades, neutron detonators, and so on — that are strewn throughout the base. The only problem is that you don't know the relative strength of each weapon. For example, it takes trial and error to find out whether a neutron detonator is more potent than a starburst. This is in keeping with the concept of the game, however, because you aren't supposed to be familiar with the items that were developed at the base.

Day of the Viper is a game that grows on you gradually. After you become familiar with the procedure for locating, identifying, and using the objects you find, you can concentrate more on the problem-solving aspects of the game. It's an enjoyable, easy-to-learn game that combines the action of a sci-fi shooter with the resource management and mapping found in quest-type games. The manual is humorous but logical.

Non-mouse users will appreciate the ease of combat and movement using the keyboard. The graphics are crisp, and the designers have infused the game with their own brand of tongue-in-cheek humor.

The game's only major flaw is in its monochrome version: *Viper* uses a color-code system to indicate objects, values, and levels of access, but the Plotter Display is practically useless for monochrome users since you can't tell from the display whether an object is useful or deadly. Perhaps a letter or symbol to indicate colors of doors and objects could partially address this problem.



The various items your Viper is carrying are listed across the top of the Nexus Console. The bolo bomb (far left) looks impressive, but the hand grenade has more destructive power.

You may become a little frustrated during your mission, but remember — if you successfully restart the base's computer, you may even be able to make it to the rec room in time to catch the late showing of the old film classic *E.T. III: The Invasion of Earth.*

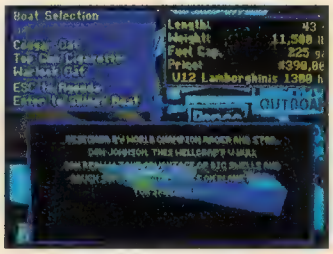
GP

Hardware requirements: 512K minimum memory for VGA, EGA, or Tandy 16-color graphics; 384K for CGA or Hercules graphics; mouse recommended; supports sound boards.

HEAT WAVE

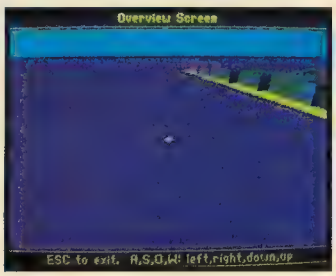
NEIL RANDALL

The game offers six courses — four in the Miami area. Scroll through them to see which one you like, or use the editor to change the Miami Shoreline course.



You can choose from among four boats: two Catamarans and two Deep-Vs. One of these beauties was designed by "Miami Vice" star Don Johnson. Why not start with it?

Despite the appearance of speedboat racing on cable sports programs and, of course, "Miami Vice," most of us haven't thought about risking our necks by planing across a wide expanse of water at more than 100 miles per hour. Because of the cost and (perceived) danger, speedboat racing joins auto racing and fighter piloting as activities best experienced behind a keyboard. So, like *Test Drive* or *Strike Aces*, **Accolade's** *Heat Wave* is both a simulation and a role-playing game.

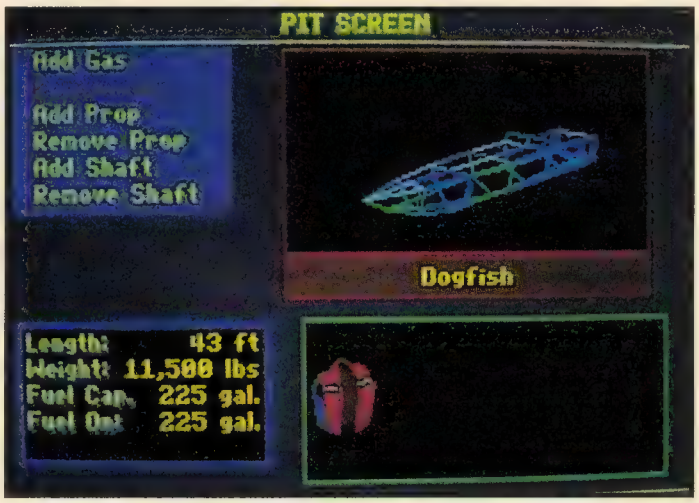


Your boat's location is represented by the arrow. Using this navigational screen, you can also see the shoreline, the locations of your opponents, and the buoys that mark the course.

You can prove your adeptness on any of six different courses, four set in the Miami area and the other two in the San Francisco Bay and on the Mississippi River. If you choose the sun and fun of Florida, you can race along the Miami shoreline, the Miami canal, its inner bay, or completely offshore. Get a preview of the courses' layout and the positions of the buoys by scrolling through the menu.

One course -- Miami Shoreline -- can be edited by moving the buoys to locations of your choice. But since you can save up to ten courses of your own design with *Heat Wave*, an editor for the other courses would be a nice feature to have, as would the ability to build courses from scratch (speedboating on the Dead Sea, anyone?). But it's still enjoyable to edit at least one of the courses.

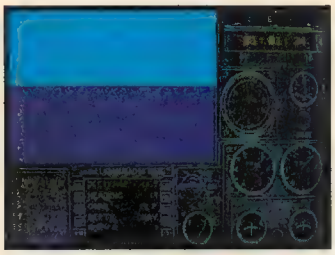
After you've selected a course, you can choose your boat. Four boats are available (leaving room for extra course and vehicle disks later on), two Catamarans and two Deep-V's. The difference, as the game makes clear, is that Catamarans (Cats) are extremely effective on smooth waters and at high speeds, while Deep-V's are better on rougher waters. It's very important to take the water conditions into account when selecting a boat — especially since these boats ride atop the water surface instead of forging a path through the water. Both types of boats are extremely fast, but your driving strategy with each should be entirely different.



Hopefully, Dogfish *will be an intimidating name for your boat. At the* Dogfish's *pit stop, lower the amount of gas you're carrying, and grab an extra propeller and shaft in case of damage.*

With a course selected and a boat ready to go, it's time to register and head for your only pit stop. You can register as a rookie or an experienced driver — it's highly recommended that you begin with the former, since *Heat Wave* takes some getting used to.

At the pit stop (which is held before the race instead of during the course as is common in automobile races) you can add or remove your propeller, shaft, and gasoline. The propellers and shafts are spare parts in case of boat damage, but taking them along can decrease your speed. Judging the gas supply can be tricky — too much gas can slow you down, but too little could leave you stranded in the middle of the course. Once you've made your supply decisions, you must attend the drivers' meeting to learn about course conditions and any alterations to the placement of the buoys.

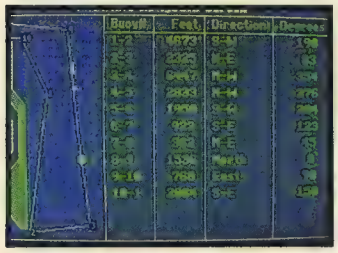


You can determine your direction, speed, fuel level, engine temperature, and other vital information from the control panel screen. You can also get a water-level view of the race if you need it.

Also available on the main menu are options for a helicopter fly-through of the course and, importantly, a chance to make a practice run of the course. Soon, though, you'll want to enter the race itself, at which point you'll be tossed into a qualification time trial. Survive this short ordeal, and it's off to the races.

Simple keyboard entries control your vehicle. For example, use the Enter key to start your engine, the + key to accelerate, and the arrow keys to steer. The Up and Down arrows adjust the trim of your boat; when you "go to plane" (i.e. begin flying on top of the waves), adjusting the trim decreases wind resistance and increases speed.

But just because the controls are simple doesn't mean the action runs as easily. You'll have a first-person perspective of the course and your boat's control panel. On the panel is a compass, clock, tachometer, speedometer, temperature gauge, fuel gauge, and a Loran (long-range navigational) radar screen. Keep an eye on all the controls, but the compass and radar are especially helpful in keeping you on track. You should also remember to keep your speed down in turns to keep from spinning, and to watch the temperature gauge for signs of overheating when you're revving the engine.



Use the navigational screen to see exactly where your opponents are on the course. You can also pull down a chart showing the direction and distance for each leg of the race.

Because the first-person perspective is not always the best one from which to view the race, *Heat Wave* offers a sophisticated helicopter view. You can change altitude, swing the helicopter left or right, or zoom into or away from your boat. Press F6 for another alternate perspective — the mile-high view — which is similarly adjustable.

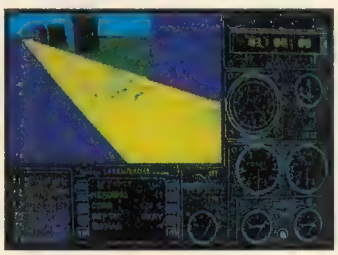
Other function keys are equally important. You'll use F1 often because it yields a navigation screen showing your position (and that of your opponents) on an overhead map of the course. It also produces a chart showing the distance and direction for each leg of the course.

Press F3 to bring up a time sheet, which shows you how quickly you've moved from buoy to buoy, as well as your penalty times. You are docked one crucial minute for missing a buoy or a marker; for jumping off the starting line too soon; for repairing your shaft or prop; or for using the bilge pump to get rid of any water you've taken on.

F4 is your damage screen, from which you can change the shaft or propeller (assuming you brought one with you), check your gas supply, or exit the race. Finally, F5 gives a ranking of all five of the drivers in the race.

Heat Wave can be played with either a joystick or the keyboard. You can select high or low levels of world detail and boat detail — options that let you tailor the game to suit the graphics capabilities of your machine. High detail for both gives the most visually pleasing game, but on some PCs this detail slows down the game.

You can also speed things up or slow them down by choosing from three "frame speeds." The more frames you choose, the more natural the animation looks. But selecting fewer frames results in a faster game.



Oops. If you run aground at high speeds, your boat is history. You obviously don't want to see this screen too often.

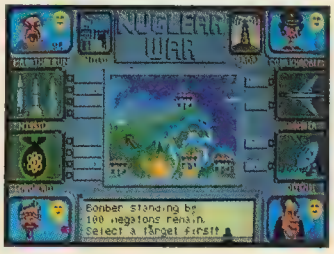
The variety of computer racing games is so great that they are commonplace by now. But *Heat Wave* offers something different — offshore superboat racing is a relatively obscure sport, and this game gives it a solid treatment with a realistic feel. Although it's similar to many racing games, it fails to deliver the sheer feeling of high speed (car-racing games in the arcades are much better at this), but simply learning what this sport is all about makes *Heat Wave* worthwhile.

GP

Hardware requirements: 384K minimum memory; VGA, EGA, CGA, Tandy 16-color, or Hercules graphics; supports sound boards.

NUCLEAR WAR

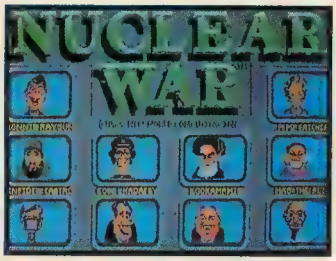
WILLIAM R. TROTTER



Study the city icons — they show you the relative populations of your own nation and those of your rivals.

Nuclear War is a brisk, colorful, irreverent, easy-to-learn strategy game loaded with black humor and curdled with some fairly sharp political satire. At least, that's how *we* feel about this game. There are also people who are certain to consider this holocaust adventure from **New World Computing** to be sophomoric, tasteless, and sick — but then you probably wouldn't want them over for dinner anyway.

You assume the role of an anonymous world leader whose nation is unfortunately located in the middle of four other countries. All the leaders of these countries are potential nuclear opponents, and at least a couple of them are certifiably insane.



Choose four rival leaders from this rogues' gallery. Does anybody look familiar?

Victory — if that's the word for it — goes to the last remaining country in the world, even it its people have been reduced to living in stone huts and eating radioactive grass. You must use every trick you can think of to become that sole surviving country. Nice guys do *not* finish last in this game.

You begin by selecting four (out of ten) opponents by clicking on the picture of the chosen leader (a happy-face appears over his/her head when you do). The leaders are all familiar (and wildly caricatured in the graphics): Infidel Kastro, Tricky Dick, Ronnie Raygun, Malomar Kadaffy ... you get the idea.

At first glance, it may seem strange to find satirical incarnations of Gandhi and Jimmy Carter as well, but these ostensibly pacifistic characters serve an interesting role in the game's strategic make-up because they can sometimes do more damage with their propaganda barrages than with 20-megaton warheads. And they're no wimps when it comes to massive retaliation, either, if someone provokes them by incinerating a city or two.

Each leader falls into a definite personality category. Some are outright warmongers; some are devious liars whose apparent motives and attitudes can never be taken at face value; and a couple are classified as "chaotic," meaning they are liable to attack just because it's Thursday or if they don't like the color of your tie. Anytime you think you have a chaotic ruler figured out, think again.

At any point in the game, you can adopt a variety of attitudes — ranging from benevolent to hostile — toward any of the other leaders. What's tricky is that the other leader might not respond logically or even rationally. For example, a "warlike" leader might respect you (and leave you alone) if you evince open hostility, but consider you a contemptible weenie if you act like a used car salesman. Expect him to reduce your country to radioactive mulch on the next turn.

You can get clues as to how the others feel about you from the way their expressions change from turn to turn. Below their faces, too, is a numerical index of their attitude. A 95 means you are OK in that leader's book, a 50 means he is neutral toward you, but anything under 25 means you're on his hit list for sure.

All your decision making takes place on the Diplomacy Terminal. On this monitor you can see pictures of all four opponents, access demographic information about their countries, and select warheads, missiles, manned bombers, or propaganda as your weapon of choice for that turn.

You may choose one — and only one — of four actions every turn. You can build your nuclear arsenal (but do this more than twice consecutively and you'll be considered to be stockpiling, which will tick off *everybody*), prepare an actual nuclear strike, launch a propaganda campaign, or erect a defense system (though this should be kept in reserve until you're badly damaged and know the enemy is about to strike again).

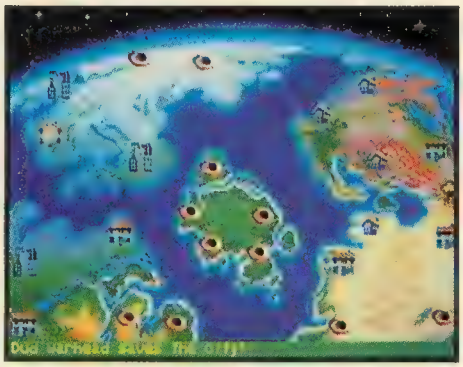
The propaganda tactic is a neat touch. Some leaders — especially the more warlike — really get angry when it's used

There it is: The Button. Push it and 100 megatons are on their merry way to your enemy's country.

against them. Others may retaliate in kind, sometimes to even greater effect than your own efforts. If it *works*, you could induce millions of enemy citizens to flee that country and settle in yours, giving you the same victory as a successful nuclear strike with no cost to yourself.

A *failed* propaganda offensive, however, can bring savage retaliation from enemies seen and unseen. For example, watch out for the dreaded 16-ton weight, a penalizing crusher from outer space that drops on a city over and over again until everything and everybody is squished out of existence.

When cities take hits and lose big numbers of inhabitants, their icons change along with their status: the icon for a 30 million-person metropolis that's taken a few on the chops may become a cottage (10 to 19 million), a thatched hut (five to nine million), or even a pup tent (one to four million). Each time one of your cities falls a notch, your industrial base shrinks, and you're able to produce fewer and fewer weapons on subsequent turns.



After a few dozen exchanges, the world begins to look like an enormous Swiss cheese.

When all the cities in a given country turn into giant craters, that country automatically fires off all its remaining nukes in a frantic Doomsday gesture that can wreak severe damage on every surviving state. Invariably, this attack also leaves one or two of the surviving countries relatively more powerful than they were before the assault.

Defense systems should be saved and used sparingly. They are very effective, but very expensive, and you're not likely to get more than two or three during a game. If you suspect you're about to be hit, but don't want to launch a preemptive missile strike in case you're wrong, you can always load a warhead on to a bomber and send it aloft. The good thing about a bomber is that it can always be recalled if it turns out not to be needed; missiles, needless to say, cannot.

Random—and sometimes rather screwy — occurrences keep the games lively. Earthquakes can flatten cities as efficiently as bombs; nuclear meltdown can render whole regions of your country uninhabitable by anything except cockroaches for the next 2,000 years; entire cities may secede without warning and simply drift into outer space to watch Armageddon unfold from ringside seats. Most bizarre of all are the rare (but devastating!) "Cattletech" strikes in which —to the war cry of "*Cherchez la vache!*" — a hailstorm of cows rains down on the hapless populace, crushing all in its path.

The victor ... and the spoils.

Nuclear War has enough subtle elements to make it a real strategy game (albeit a fairly elementary one), but it's very easy to learn and the games tend to be fast and crazy. By the end of a game, the entire planet is usually pocked with craters and the "winner" has only a tent or two left, indicating that the population—and standard of living — have digressed to the Stone Age. It's then that you realize that this zany, nose-thumbing satire actually makes a very real and deadly serious point.

GP

Defense systems work well, but you'd better not deploy them too soon or they may be wasted.

Hardware requirements: 512K (640K for VGA and MCGA graphics); VGA, EGA, MCGA, and CGA graphics; mouse optional; 8mhz or better recommended.

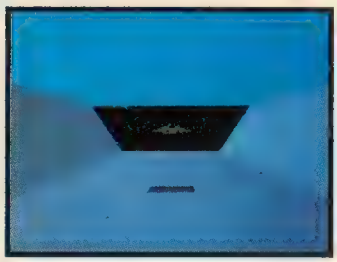
POWERDROME

WILLIAM R. TROTTER

The view from the pilot's seat makes it look like you're always *about to crash. Of course, until you get the hang of your controls, you probably will be.*

Racing simulations have long been a solid part of the PC games market. As computer games have become more detailed, with snappier graphics and smoother animation, racing games have kept pace, upgrading to take advantage of each technological improvement.

Some now have real-life scenic environments, some have car-to-car combat thrown in, and some claim to mimic the handling characteristics of supercars that most people will never even see, much less drive. In short, the illusion of speed and danger continues to excite today's more sophisticated (and more jaded) game audience.



The solid black wall at the end of the pit lane is really nothing but a force field. You can drive right through it.

Powerdrome from **Electronic Arts** succeeds handsomely in creating the illusion of hurtling acceleration, hair-raising turns, and close brushes with high-speed doom. Graphically, the game is a psychedelic knock-out; taken as a whole it's one of the freshest and most attractive racing programs to come along in many moons.

By the 25th century, high-stakes racing is no longer Earthbound, but is carried out by daredevil pilots who race "turbo-rapide" Typhoons at blinding speeds along three-dimensional courses that float in outer space or in mid-air. You, at the helm of your flamered Typhoon, must compete against four of the meanest, hottest pilots in the galaxy. You've all triumphed over dozens of rivals, and now you're assembled for the final contest — the one that decides who is Powerdrome champion of the universe.

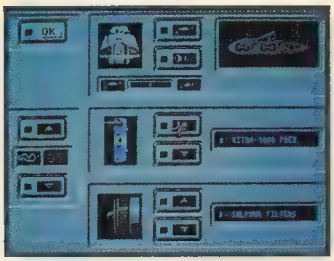
The series of races takes place on six very different tracks. One is a fairly conventional practice oval here on Earth. The other five are anything but conventional, being dizzy, twisty, three-dimensional structures that tangle and curve and knot in midair like insane Moebius strips. Some of these tracks are located on oxygen-breathing worlds, but others are located in ammonia, sulphur, or methane atmospheres, so you must equip your Typhoon with special engine filters even to finish the course — or even one lap of it for that matter.

Driving these courses on a practice run is challenging enough; driving them in competition with four cutthroat drivers can be a wild ride indeed, since wrecking one's opponent isn't against Powerdrome rules. But mere driving skills are only a part of what it takes to become the Powerdrome champion and win the coveted Cyberneufe Trophy.

Because each of the courses imposes different conditions on the event (a combination of atmosphere, weather, and track conditions), and since all the drivers are equally competitive, the key to victory may lie in the care you take in fine-tuning your Typhoon. You can select from five different aerofoils (each with a different sensitivity), as well as various sizes and types of speed brake. You can also choose the degree of pitch and roll sensitivity in the controls, the type of fuel, and the filter (if any) needed for the upcoming contest.

Repairs and refueling are carried out in the robopits. But, like the pit stops in conventional racing, you must try to time your visits to match your overall racing strategy. One cause of frequent pit stops, for example, is a sudden sand or

The six race courses are equally unusual and challenging.



Races can be won and lost on the tune-up screen.

In some races, alien atmospherics generate bizarre and hypnotic color patterns.

oxygen filter and force you to stop and obtain a particle filter.

You begin each race from inside your pit area. As you race down the pit lane, you'll see what appears to be a black wall looming in front of you — don't worry, you'll blast right through it; it's only a one-way force field to keep pilots from entering the pits the wrong way.

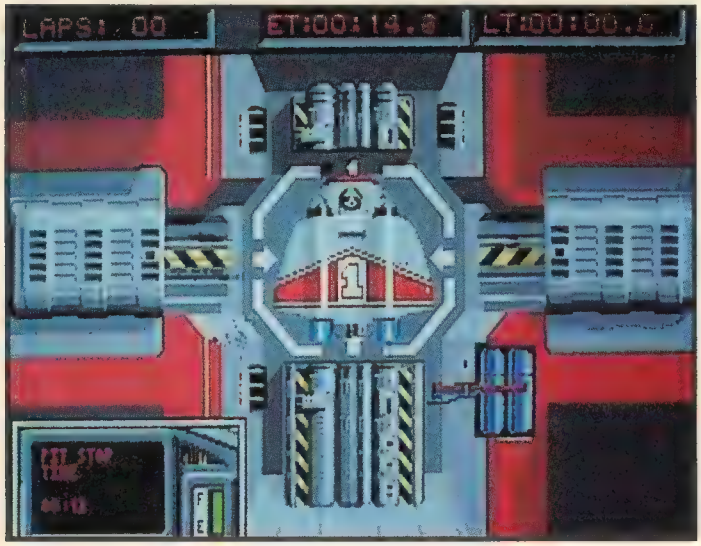
Once you're out on the track, rookie drivers are advised not to open their throttles full-bore until they are really able to control their machines — to do so is to risk almost certain loss of control and a most certainly fatal crash. Half-speed, with a good deal of "yoke" on the controls, is probably all you can handle until you get the hang of driving. As your expertise grows, you may even be able to tame the fierce acceleration of the afterburners — whose use is not recommended for the novice driver.

Powerdrome is without a doubt one of the most exhilarating race programs ever developed. The three-dimensional race courses are dazzlingly colorful and imaginative, and the illusion of wild speed is gripping. You'll find yourself hurtling down corridors of eerie color; down stomach-lurching inclines and deep crevasses; sliding past huge crushing gates; and zooming down long dark tunnels, trying to stay within the guide lights.

Steering from the pilot's point of view is *very* tricky, almost impossible until you get used to it. Most pilots will prefer to take their first laps from the point-of-view outside of and slightly behind their Typhoon — this viewpoint also lets you appreciate the game's dynamite graphics to the fullest.

And if your computer is slow, just press "W" to speed up things by changing the solid-fill shapes to wire frames. Try it for fun at least once even if you have a fast computer; it just looks neat. To top it off, you can interconnect with another computer and have one-on-one races with a friend. What a terrific racing program!

GP



Emergency repairs and refueling are taken care of by the servo-machines in the robopits.

Hardware requirements: 640K minimum memory; VGA, EGA, CGA, Hercules or Tandy 16-color graphics; joystick and mouse optional.

REVOLUTION '76

WILLIAM R. TROTTER

If, after playing a few games of *Revolution '76*, you come to the conclusion that the success of the American Revolution was something of an historic miracle, you've gotten the point.

This new **Britannica** game by historian-programmer Ed Bever (whose other gaming credits include *Conflict in Vietnam* and *Crusade in Europe*) puts you in charge of the 13 colonies at their weakest and most vulnerable moment: the day the decision was made to break irrevocably with England.

Make your Cabinet appointments wisely. You'll find it almost impossible to strike a balance between radicals and conservatives, Southerners and Northerners, but you have to try.

With no government, no constitution, no treasury, and no army save for some ill-prepared militia companies, the would-be nation is rife with sectional and ideological disharmony and has just thrown down the gauntlet to the world's foremost military power. It's hopeless, of course — and yet it worked once.... Can you make it work again?

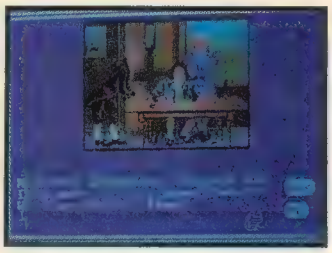
Each game-turn represents a year's time, during which you handle all the decision making in a series of phases devoted to domestic politics, international relations, and the military situation. There is much behind-the-screens complexity in *Revolution '76*, but the on-screen format is deceptively simple and self-explanatory. It's possible to play an entire game just by looking at the screen and doing what comes naturally — but if you do, you'll miss savoring all the subtleties.

Each screen is devoted to a basic, overriding function of government, and each icon symbolizes a specific choice to be made. Click first on the person, region, or city to be affected, then click on the decision icon. A new icon, symbolizing the result of your decision, appears next to (or on top of) the person or place affected. That's about all there is to it: simple, clear, elegant — all the tricky stuff goes on behind the scenes or inside your head.

Study each man's qualities — and his politics — before making your appointments.

Most screens also have an Info icon. If you click on it after choosing the person or place to be affected, you'll get the sort of in-depth data you need to make informed decisions.

The sheer contentiousness of the era is reflected in the numerous prompting or warning screens that appear, usually just before or after you make a decision that some faction, somewhere, doesn't like (i.e., about 90 per cent of the time!). The prompt screens are, in effect, telegrams to you from someone or some group, pleading that a certain course of action be taken (or not taken) during the next phase of play.



All too often, you'll be prompted (or chided) for your actions or lack of them. You obviously can't please everybody, yet some of this unsought advice should be heeded.

These are certainly *not* disinterested suggestions, but are more like memos from some powerful lobbyist. They do not necessarily indicate the best course of action, but they do let you know that some faction has a strong interest in a particular decision. It is often wise to take such information into consideration.

Warning screens, on the

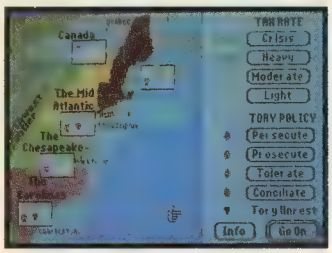
One of your most persistent headaches will be the Tory population. A carrot-and-stick approach is generally the best policy.

other hand, let you know in no uncertain terms that if you follow Policy A rather than Policy B, you're going to anger the faction issuing the warning. It is not possible to go through this game without alienating some folks, but if you anger too many too often, you'll find enthusiasm, recruitment, and revenues drying up, and Tory sentiment growing like crabgrass.

Military policy is one of the trickiest areas to master. After all, England controls the sea and can land troops — lots of them — *anywhere*. You, on the other hand, never have enough regulars to meet every threat, and the regional militia units are often more trouble than they're worth. You have to use them, however, because any region of the country that's left undefended is likely to slip into Toryism as soon as the first Redcoats land anywhere on its shores.

Battles are fought when opposing units enter the same city or region. You can assign, transfer, or sack commanders (it's fun to see how much mileage you can get out of Benedict Arnold, for example) and set military priorities, but *Revolution '76* will not — repeat, *not* — allow you to take tactical command.

The computer resolves things so all you get is a generic battle graphic and a final tally of casualties and strategic changes caused by the engagement. War-gamers will regret not being able to jump into the fray, but *Revolution '76* makes no claim to be that kind of strategic simulation. For it to zoom in suddenly on individual battles would skew what is, overall, a remarkably well-balanced system.



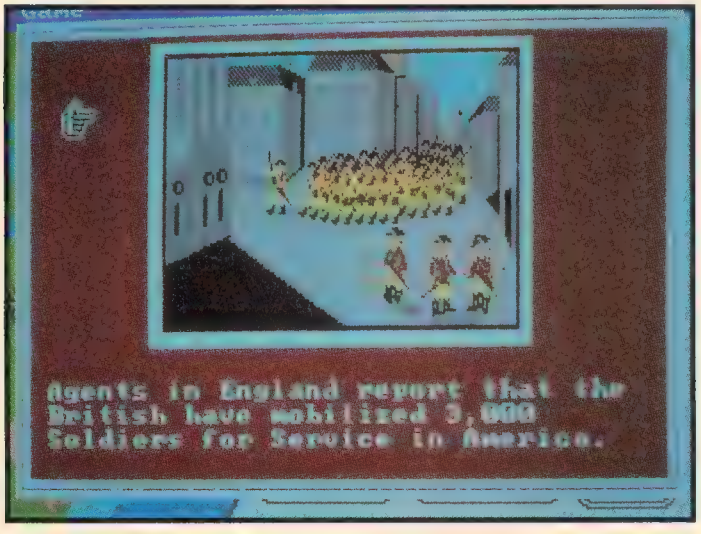
Your most crucial administrative decisions will, in fact, revolve around the questions of how to treat the Tories and how to tax effectively but fairly.

Production values do show a few budgetary constraints that might irk some players. The original game was designed on the Apple IIGS, and the IBM version is a rough-and-ready portage job. You get the Apple manual with an IBM insert, and you also get Apple graphics that, when compared to even the low-end of most contemporary EGA work, may strike some players as unacceptably coarse — even crude.

But if you're intrigued by the Revolutionary era, you probably won't mind its limitations. *Revolution '76* does a remarkably convincing job of simulating the fast-changing, treacherous dynamics of the age. You must confront the whole smorgasbord of problems that faced the Founding Fathers, and once you become enmeshed in the process, you can't help but gain a new respect for those gentlemen. Nor can you escape the conclusion that the Colonies were incredibly lucky to have leadership of such sagacity and moral courage.

Aside from its appeal to a sizable number of history fans, *Revolution '76* would seem to be ideal for high school — even college-level — classroom use. It is easily learned, and an average game lasts about an hour. The experience is richly educational, as well as lots of fun.

GP



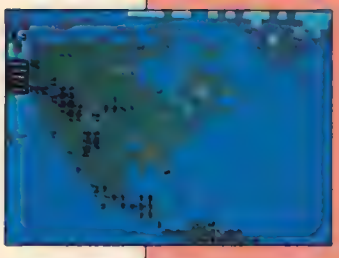
Near the end of each phase, you receive an update on what the Lobsterbacks are doing.

Hardware requirements: 640K minimum memory; EGA graphics; mouse required.

SIMCITY *GOES GLOBAL!*

Would-be world builders, rejoice! The same folks at **Maxis Software** who brought you the award-winning simulation, *SimCity*, are at it again on an even grander scale with the release late this year of *SimEarth*, subtitled *Gaia, The Living Planet*.

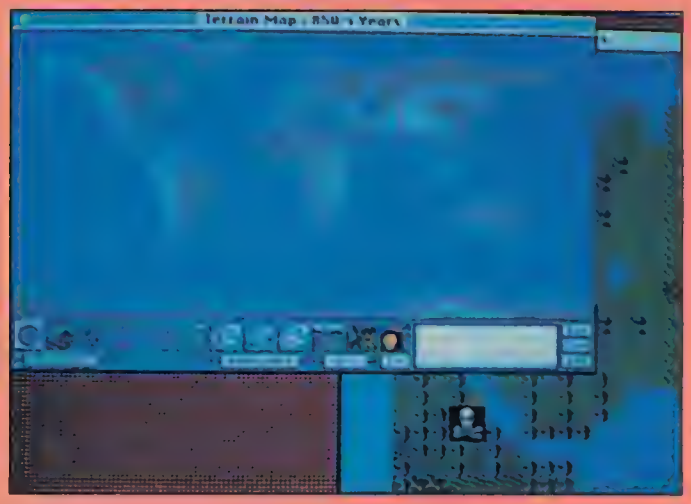
SimCity was one of the most popular computer games of 1989. Game designer Will Wright put together a unique program that offers players the opportunity to manage virtually all aspects of a city's development — industrial, residential, commercial, and all of the individual components that make up those categories. Plan your city well, and the Sims (simulated people) move in and create thriving metropolises. Plan poorly, and you'll run your city into the ground.



Virtually all aspects of SimEarth *are yours to manipulate, from climate to the drift of continents.*

SimEarth goes even further. Based on Cambridge scientist James Lovelock's "Gaia" principle of the earth as a living, self-sustaining organism, *SimEarth* is part of Maxis Software's approach to creating "software toys" — an open-ended, nonlinear toy in which the goal is not to win or lose, but rather to explore and to have fun, as with *SimCity*.

Lovelock, whose picture will appear on the packaging, also has been working with Maxis on the development of the program. Scenarios for *SimEarth* will include "Daisy World," based on Lovelock's own computer simulation of the Gaia principle; "The Greening of Mars," in which players build and sustain an atmosphere on the red planet (also based on a Lovelock book); and other scenarios that let you follow the development of earth from the beginning of time and also build your own earth from scratch.

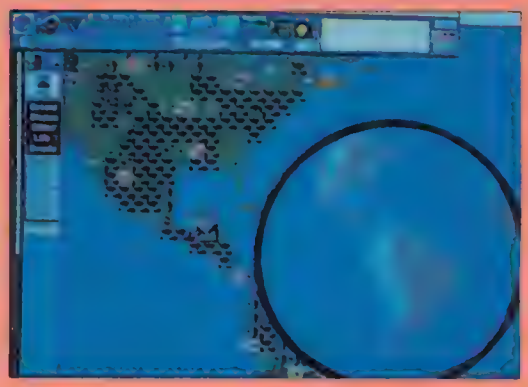


As with SimCity, SimEarth *has a host of menu commands and options, all easy to understand and use.*

Much like *SimCity*, *SimEarth* offers players an opportunity to learn a tremendous amount about how something works, while having an entertaining time in the process.

What else can we expect from Maxis Software? How about *SimSolar System*, *SimCity II*, and alternate graphics sets for *SimCity* that let you create Medieval, Wild West, ancient Asia, a moon base, and future U.S. and European cityscapes. And there will also be CD-ROM versions of *SimCity* which will have a variety of new extensions.

Maxis hopes to have both the Macintosh and PC versions of *SimEarth* available before the end of the year.



Take a look at the big picture or zoom in for a more in-depth look at your simulated earth environment.

VIETNAM REVISITED

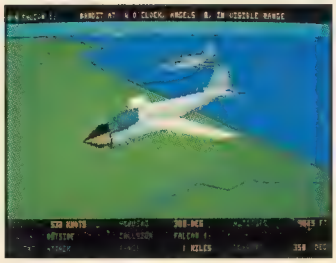
Timing could be everything for **Spectrum HoloByte**. Its latest game, *Flight of the Intruder* is now available — just before the major motion-picture release of the same name in late summer. Based on Stephen Coonts' best-selling novel, *Flight of the Intruder* features the A-6 Intruder and F-4 jet, those that Coonts himself flew as a Navy pilot during the Vietnam war. Spectrum HoloByte notes that development of this simulator was aided by a variety of Vietnam naval airmen, including Coonts.

You choose which plane to fly from your base on the carrier *U.S.S. Shiloh*. Action takes place during the 1972 Linebacker campaign over North Vietnam. Your goal is to search for enemy targets in 13 different operations, each one consisting of up to four missions. (There are 36 missions in the entire game.) The operations — each with unique targets, strategy, and adventure — build on one another to make up the overall campaign. The results of an operation determine your position in future runs. Following the completion of each operation, you're given a detailed analysis of your successes and failures.

The game allows two players using a direct cable link to dogfight or team up against the enemy. In joint missions, both players can work as each other's wingman by piloting an A-6 or F-4 together. Also, one player can pilot the F-4 and patrol the area for bandits while the other takes on the bombing role in the A-6.

Still another role you can assume is that of Commander Air Group. Here you may design custom missions by selecting primary and secondary targets; choosing weapons and other external stores; selecting waypoints; and deciding on departure times and duties. As Commander Air Group, you can also fly any aircraft in the mission.

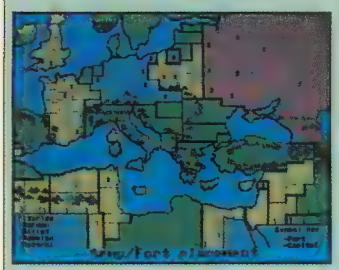
A copy of Coonts' best-selling novel is included with each package.



The view from outside the plane warns you of nearby dangers.

An operation consists of several different targets to destroy.

THE FATE OF EUROPE IN ONE NIGHT



Storm Across Europe

Wargamers interested in the big picture will be delighted to know that *Storm Across Europe*, an award-winning World War II game from **SSI**, is now available for the PC. The game covers the entire war (1939-1945) in Europe — from North Africa to Sweden and from Gibraltar to Russia's Ural Mountains.

Storm Across Europe is designed for one to three players — you can choose to portray British, Soviet, or German forces. SSI promises that you can complete a full game in as little as one evening since each game turn represents three months of action.

Army units, each rated for strength and efficiency, have various numbers of tanks, paratroops, infantry, air support, and mechanized forces. But the players control every military facet of the war, including the movement of armies, amphibious landings, U-boat campaigns, bombing strikes, naval attacks against enemy shipping lines, and the juggling of resources between production and advanced research.

Players may choose from multiple scenarios and may change starting levels for each country to explore what-if scenarios.

FROM WASTELAND *TO* FOUNTAIN OF DREAMS

Mutants abound in Fountain of Dreams.

Florida used to be a garden paradise, but now it's a radioactive, post-nuclear nightmare. Your destiny of sun and fun has changed as well — you're slowly mutating into a beast, and the water from the legendary Fountain of Dreams is the only thing that can save you.

As a result of nuclear blasts to Atlanta and Georgian military bases, the peninsula of Florida is jarred loose from the rest of the charred United States. Individual communities have formed city-states, and after 50 years a certain social order has manifested itself. Except for the vigilantes and Killer Clowns, it wouldn't be such a bad place to live.

You, of course, aren't searching for the Fountain of Dreams to benefit just yourself — you're hoping to unite the people of the former Sunshine State and destroy the renegade beachcombers, mutant dolphins, and voodoo vigilantes that fill the world of *Fountain of Dreams*. **Electronic Arts'** fallout follow-up to *Wasteland* is a quest-adventure in which you can play one of five character classes, from survivalist to hood.

You can create as many as three characters to form your party, and there are other characters you must recruit along the way. Your mutant band can be skilled in medicine, lock-picking, mechanics, pharmacy, gunsmithing, linguistic, or several other fields. Even active mutations such as paralytic touch or camouflage can be handy in a pinch.

The Sunshine State isn't what it used to be.

YOUNGBLOOD OUT FOR MORE BLOOD

If you enjoy doing your fighting from behind the security of a 30-foot-tall metal war machine, check out the second installment in **Infocom's** *BattleTech* series.

BattleTech: The Crescent Hawk's Revenge, returns to the FASA universe, picking up where its predecessor left off. You once again play Jason Youngblood, a young warrior searching for his kidnapped father. But once Jason locates his father, the game jumps two decades into the future where the Inner Sphere of the five Successor States is threatened by the Clans.

The game includes the BattleMech war machines found in the original adventure, but introduces the OnmiMech assault vehicle and assorted hovertanks, aerospace fighters, and dropships. The game's 20 sceharios are set on five different planets, and multiple endings guarantee many hours of game play.

WINGLEADER

Wingleader: The 3-D Space Combat Simulator

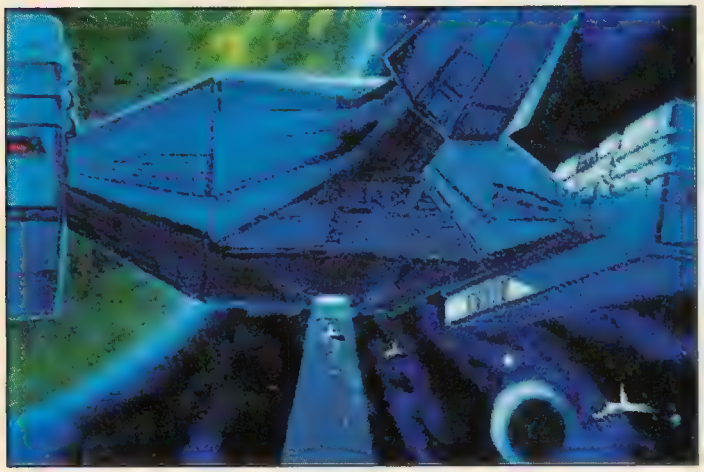
Origin swears that *Wingleader: The 3-D Space Combat Simulator* is a revolutionary entertainment product. It's supposed to "look, sound, and play more like an interactive, multi-dimensional theatre experience than any conventional computer game."

Certainly the story has a familiar ring to it: you're a hero protecting Mankind from invading aliens. As you gain experience, you move up in command through four levels of starfighter.

Wingleader combines flight simulation with arcade action. You'll be blowing up Kilrathians, but if you don't understand your starfighter's controls, you'll be blasted to stardust in a milli-second.

Eight different wingmen, ranging from old veterans to by-the-book novices, are on hand to help you during your different missions.

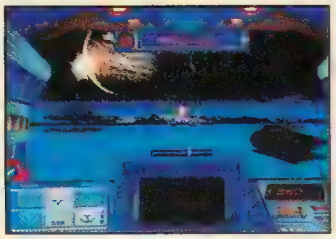
STELLAR 7: NEW AND IMPROVED



Stellar 7 *has excellent VGA 3-D graphics.*

Back in 1984, a little-known company out of Oregon produced a 3-D arcade-action game. *Stellar 7*, from **Dynamix**, quickly became a cult classic.

But as time passed and technology changed, this little shoot-em-up began to look more and more dated. Meanwhile Dynamix was developing great-looking, high-resolution graphics by digitizing photographs of live actors and sets. The company was also improving its "3Space" modeling display system used in the original *Stellar 7*.



The view from the cockpit.

Now that Dynamix is a division of the larger and better-known Sierra On-Line, *Stellar 7* is being re-released with full 256-color, digitized VGA graphics and specially designed sound effects.

In *Stellar 7*, you are at the helm of an intergalactic war tank. Aliens are threatening Earth's safety, and it's up to you to send the enemies into orbit. You'll battle enemies on seven different worlds, each with different terrains and foes. Use your controls to blast away, and your radar screen to distinguish natural formations from your true enemies.

Stellar 7 is the first of four fall Dynamix releases — all have stunning graphics, and promise to deliver storylines and game play of the same caliber. Expect *Red Baron*, a World War I flight simulator; *Rise of the Dragon: A Blade Hunter Mystery*, a futuristic interactive adventure set in the Orient; and *Heart of China*, a 1930's adventure which takes place during China's revolution, to all be on store shelves by Christmas.

Are you brave enough to face any foe?

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THE NEW PS/1: CAN IBM GO HOME AGAIN?

The PS/1 is IBM's second bid to penetrate the home market.

More than 21 million home computers have been sold in the U.S. over the past five years, most of them **IBM** PC compatibles. But one major computer company has been largely excluded from this bonanza: IBM itself.

Although IBM's original PC inspired the basic design of all PC compatibles, IBM's own computers have been swamped by a flood of less expensive clones. Many of the components for these clones are manufactured in the Far East, then assembled in the U.S. and sold under various brand names. IBM's machines, priced higher and marketed mainly to businesses, have proven less popular among home users than their copycat competitors.

For nearly two years, rumors have abounded that IBM was working on a new low-cost computer to compete with the clones and bolster the company's position in the home and educational markets. This summer, the long-awaited machine was finally unveiled as the PS/1.

Basically, the PS/1 is an enhanced version of IBM's discontinued AT. Introduced in 1984, the AT was the first personal computer to use an 80286 microprocessor chip, which made it significantly faster than earlier PCs based on 8088 and 8086 chips. It was eventually replaced by the IBM PS/2 line in 1987.

Like the AT, the PS/1 uses the MS-DOS operating system and is compatible with virtually all DOS software made for other IBM computers and clones. It also adopts the AT's internal architecture, rather than IBM's Microchannel architecture found in most PS/2 computers. That means the PS/1 is compatible with a wider range of plug-in boards and devices.

The PS/1 offers several enhancements over the old AT, including built-in VGA graphics and peripheral ports, an internal modem, bundled software, and about twice the processing speed. It's also designed to be easier to set up, particularly by users with limited computer experience.

Unlike the AT and most clones, however, the PS/1 has no internal expansion slots. For those who want to add plug-in boards, IBM offers a three-slot external expansion box.

There are four basic configurations of the PS/1, ranging in price from $999 for a floppy-based system with a black-and-white monitor to $1,999 for a hard disk system with a color monitor. All configurations share these standard features: an 80286 microprocessor running at a speed of ten megahertz (with one wait state); 512K of random access memory (RAM); a 1.44-megabyte, 3.5-inch floppy disk drive; built-in VGA graphics; an RS-232 serial port occupied by a 2400 bits-per-second modem; a parallel printer port; a 101-key keyboard; a mouse; a real-time clock; DOS 4.01 in read only

memory (ROM); and IBM's PS/1 DOS shell in ROM.

All PS/1 computers also include a PS/1 system tutorial; a copy of Microsoft *Works* 2.0 (an integrated software package that includes a word processor, spreadsheet, database manager, and telecommunications program); all necessary software for accessing Prodigy, an on-line service founded by IBM and Sears; and an introductory package for accessing Promenade, a new online service starting this fall.

The $999 PS/1 comes with a black-and-white monitor capable of displaying VGA graphics in shades of gray. With a color VGA monitor, the price is $1,449. The next higher model has a black-and-white monitor but is equipped with a 30-megabyte hard disk drive and one megabyte of RAM; the retail price is $1,649. The top-end model adds a color VGA monitor and costs $1,999.

IBM offers several options for the PS/1, such as 512K RAM expansion cards ($199); a second 3.5-inch floppy disk drive ($249); a 30-megabyte hard drive for those who start with a floppy-based system ($599); 5.25-inch floppy disk drives ($299); and a color VGA monitor for those who start with monochrome systems ($699). The external expansion box that's required for adding cards is $169.

For game players and musicians, IBM offers the PS/1 Audio Card and PS/1 joystick. The $129 Audio Card (which doesn't require the expansion box) improves the computer's sound and music capabilities when used with programs that support it. It also has a MIDI (musical instrument digital interface) connector for attaching music keyboards and other MIDI devices.

The joystick costs $39 separately, or $249 with the Audio Card and three programs: *Where in the World is Carmen Sandiego?* from Broderbund; *Silpheed* from Sierra On-Line; and *Cakewalk Apprentice* from Twelve Tone Systems.

The PS/1 isn't the first computer IBM has introduced that is specifically designed for the home market. IBM's first attempt was the PCjr, which appeared in early 1984 and was discontinued about a year later after disappointing sales. The PCjr was crippled by a poor keyboard, limited expandability, lackluster performance, and a relatively high price.

Although the PS/1 has a good keyboard, in other ways it suffers in comparison with similarly priced PC clones. Because most home users prefer color systems, and because much of today's PC software (including *Works*) requires a hard disk for tolerable performance, the base price of a practical PS/1 system is actually $2,000. Faster machines with more room for expansion are widely available for less money.

IBM's strongest selling point for the PS/1 may be ease of use. The computer is designed to be set up in minutes and turned on with the flick of a single switch (the system's power supply is in the monitor). Hard disk systems come with all software already installed. The tutorial walks new users through the basics, and additional help is available online from Prodigy.

Another factor in the PS/1's favor, of course, is IBM's name. Its reputation for quality, compatibility, and reliability of service could sway prospective buyers to choose a PS/1 over an anonymous clone.

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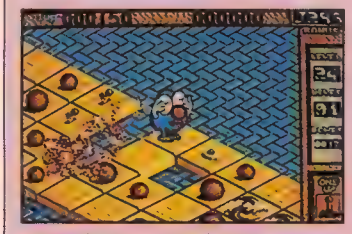


A Bombuzal *screen from* Brainblaster.

rainblaster, the new release from **Cinemaware**, contains not one but *two* mind-bending puzzle games. *Xenon 2* is an arcade game with coin-op quality. For the more strategically minded, *Bombuzal* is filled with more than 120 levels of "explosive mayhem."

The Xenites of *Xenon 2* are hated throughout the universe. And now they're plotting their revenge on decades of galactic disgust. They've planted five bombs throughout the time line of history. Only you can save the pattern of time.

TNT makes its appearance in *Bombuzal* as well. Only this time, you have to detonate bombs instead of disarming them. The bombs are located on different tiles — ice-covered tiles, spinning tiles, or tiles that disappear and reappear. There are 2-D and 3-D displays for the hundreds of levels of bombardment.

Due on store shelves in September is the new animated fantasy from Cliff Johnson, the designer of *The Fool's Errand*. The new game, *3 in Three*, is another compilation of puzzles tied together by a central plot. There may be 90 puzzles to solve, but losing is impossible. Of course, winning isn't easy either... which may be a puzzle in itself.

The world of *3 in Three* is populated by personified letters and numbers. When Number 3 is blown from her cozy home within a spreadsheet, she enters the zany world of letters and is as much out of place as Dorothy was in Oz.

SPACE 1889

At the turn of the century, science-fiction writers seemed fascinated with the concept of space and time. Jules Verne, Edgar Rice Burroughs, and H.G. Wells all let their considerable imaginations run rampant with fantastic time-travel machines and spaceships.

Space 1889

Paragon has taken the ideas of those Victorian writers and created *Space 1889*, a mystery role-playing adventure. In the game, outer space is made of ether; space travel is possible with modified sailing vessels. You control five characters as they explore the galaxy using the limited technology of the 1800s. Each character has different skills and abilities which makes him or her a valuable member of the crew.

You can visit Mars, Venus, the Moon — even Earth's mysterious corners, such as King Tut's tomb or Atlantis. Over 18 cities and 120 locations are yours to explore. Historic weapons are at your disposal, and don't be surprised if some historic characters pop up.

YOU'RE THE BOSS IN BIG BUSINESS

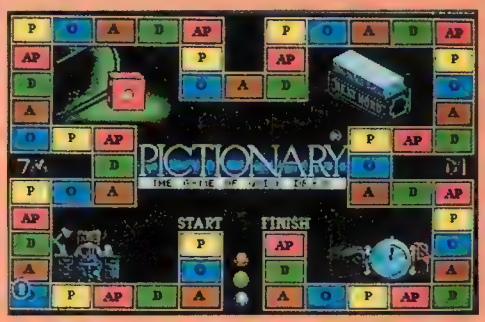
Having a tough day at work? Is the water cooler broken and the boss out for blood? Do you sometimes wish you could chuck it all and start your own company?

Welcome to the world of *Big Business*. **DigiTek** has taken the fine points of running a manufacturing company and humorously devised this simulation of profits and bankruptcy.

Three players each begin the game with equal assets and plans to market the same product. The winner is simply the player with the greatest net worth by the end of the game.

Big Business is an accurate portrayal of the cut-throat world of corporations, but it's largely played for laughs.

A PICTURE'S WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS



The graphics on screen duplicate the board on which Pictionary *is played.*

A computer game of the popular board game *Pictionary* has been developed by **Broderbund**. This "game of quick draw" is a kind of visual charades in which players draw images depicting a word or phase instead of acting them out.

Pictionary can be played in three different ways: two teams can each draw pictures on screen for their teammates to guess; the computer can draw the pictures and the two teams can try to be the first with the correct answer; and a single player can guess the answers to the computer drawings.

You say that you haven't used a computer drawing program before? No problem. The on-screen drawing tools in *Pictionary* are easy to use.

With more than 2,500 words to sketch, each game will be practically brand-new. And if you're no longer challenged by the clues, change the time limit. A clue you can guess in three minutes won't be nearly as easy to guess in only 60 seconds flat.

Anyone who can't tell that this is a drawing of a top hat should find another game to play.

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If you were one of the more than quarter of a million card game fans who put everything else on hold to play *Hoyle Book of Games: Volume One*, clear the next month or two — *Volume Two* is already on store shelves.

Unlike the first *Book of Games*, which featured a cast of characters to select as opponents, the second volume contains 28 different solitaire games.

Cardshark and designer Warren Schwader overlooked many of the most common solitaire games in favor of some strange new versions with which players may not be familiar. For example, in Poker Square, you try to fill in a 5 x 5 grid so that each row and column forms the best possible poker hand.

Or in Eliminator, you deal all the cards into four columns, then move the topmost card of any column into a reserve pile. The reserve piles are then built up and down in any suit until the columns are empty.

Of course, there are familiar solitaire games in the package as well: Klondike, Canfield, Golf, Pyramid, and Yukon, for instance.

Players can customize their skills by selecting either the "easy" or "hard" versions of each game. The two different formats play by the same rules, but usually differ in the numbers of redeals or the number of foundation cards.

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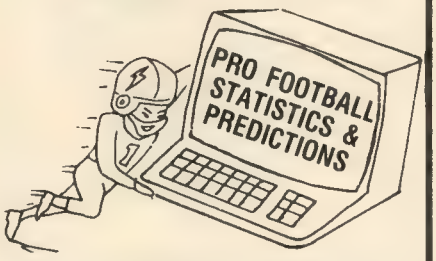

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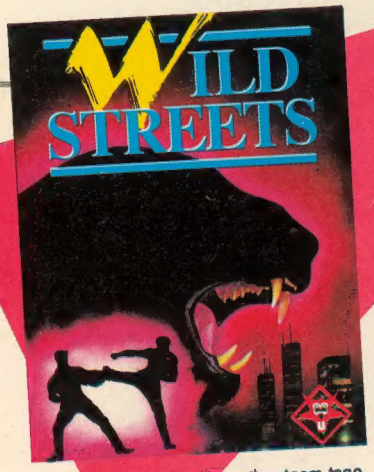

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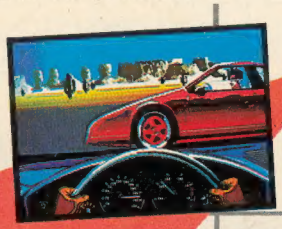

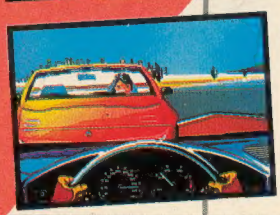

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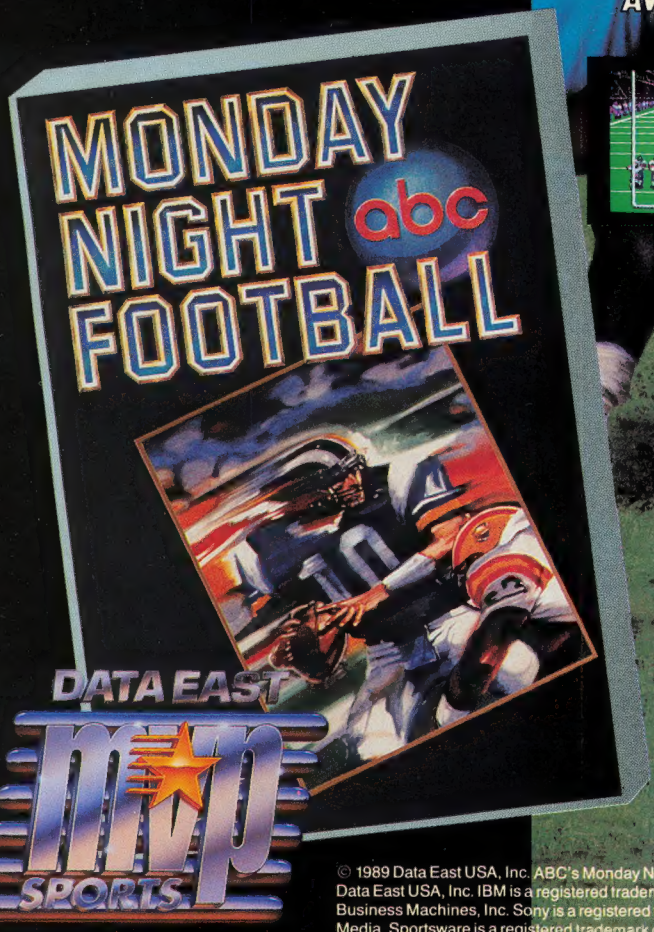

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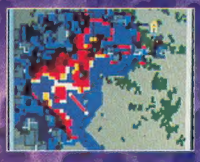

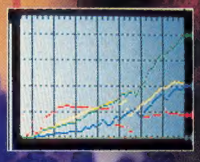

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